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The Student Governance Review (SGR) 2001 at the University of Cape Town (UCT) – a Systems Perspective

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Declaration

I declare to the best of my knowledge that this report is my own work. All the material in this report is based on interviews from the Student Governance Review (SGR) process 2001, library research and from material taught on the Systemic Leadership Development Program, 2000, at the University of Cape Town (UCT). I wish to thank my two supervisors Corrinne Shaw and Professor Tom Ryan who guided me throughout this research, as well as all the participants from the SGR who gave their input. This research was conducted during the time frame of 2001/2002 therefore some aspects of the recommendations would be applicable for that time frame.

University of Cape Town

Abstract

Co-operative governance is the new principle that organisations and institutions are adopting to be sustainable. Because of the rapidly changing environment and pressures of democratisation of institutions, organisations and institutions needed a model that would make them relevant and, at the same time, competitive in a fast-growing environment. This model, which requires an increase in participation and responsibility from people in an organisation is being adopted by the University of Cape Town (UCT) as it expands access to people of different social backgrounds and co-opting people previously sidelined, such as the Student's Representative Council (SRC), into mainstream decision-making. This has put pressure on the SRC as they are forced to have knowledgeable input into the University's policy and to make legitimate decisions on behalf of students. To be effective, the SRC needs co-ordination and co-operation from the student constituents. However, the student constituents operate as individual and fragmented units with no mechanism of communication or co-ordination between them. This is partly due to the fact that they are self-sufficient from the SRC and tend to work hand-in-hand with the University management. As a result, the SRC has become irrelevant to the other constituents and the students.

The SRC, throughout the years, has organised reviews in order to be effective and relevant to the student population, but has been unable to produce appropriate changes or maintain outcomes to obtain the coordination they need. The 2001 Students Governance Review (SGR), initiated by the SRC leader 2000, seemed to be given adequate planning, resources and effort than the 1970 and 1997 attempts. However, these outcomes were met with huge resistance and later discarded. This problem is also due to the high turnover of student leadership. As an outsider to student governance, I could see there was a pattern of little or no implementation of the outcomes of reviews. My initial question was "*why again?*"

As a researcher in this field, it was necessary for me to approach the problem from a fresh perspective due to this pattern in behaviour and operate within a framework that would allow me to get to the root causes. Systems thinking enabled me to do this as it allowed me to get a holistic perspective of the problem. First of all, I had to understand the system I was dealing with. The problem seemed complex and was based in a social context, therefore I used qualitative data-collection techniques such as participant observation and one-on-one in-depth interviews. Action learning was the method of research I used. It follows Handy's learning cycle, which is made up of a question, theories or answers to deal with the question, followed by application or testing in the real world and lastly reflection. Action learning is a type of research that seeks to change a situation for the better and helps the researcher contribute to knowledge. I then had to

equip myself with the relevant tools to enable me to define the problem. Because of its complexity, it was necessary that the correct problem be solved so that the solutions are long-lasting.

The affinity diagram, and the causal loop diagram (CLD) were systems thinking tools that helped me to formulate and define the problem. These tools also enabled me to create a research question: why do projects undertaken by the SRC to review and resolve student governance result in little or no implementation?

The CLD helped me produce hypothetical theories around the issues and find out where intervention would be needed. Interventions to deal with these issues will be in the area of improving co-ordination of student governance and leadership development. Unless these are dealt with, reviews will be worthless. The CLD also helped me to see that the SRC needs to work with a viable team which will be necessary to produce change in a review.

Armed with these hypotheses, I then proceeded to problem-solve and apply these theories in the field. Due to the uncertainties of social contexts, I needed a methodology that was rigorous and necessary to unearth all the variables of the problem situation. The Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) was the most relevant because it allowed me to obtain a diverse perspective of the problem from different points of view. It also ensured that solutions are desirable and feasible for the stakeholders because it enabled the researcher to participate and obtain feedback from the stakeholders as to which solutions will work for everybody. Desirable solutions from using the SSM are to improve co-ordination in student governance through the following:

- Using the class representatives, and recognising them as vital assets in student governance, having uniform selection/election time for all student constituents, electing the SRC from the SP and improving representation in student governance.
- Co-ordination is also improved in student governance by improving the soft information channels. The SRC should get into the habit of observing and interacting with other student leaders.

The SRC also needs tools to maintain co-ordination and ensure they have a true representation of issues in student governance. An action learning approach will ensure this and enable them continuously to look for ways to improve their constituent as well as develop their abilities. Thus the SSM was used for the wider issues.

The Viable Systems Model (VSM), a systems thinking tool, was used to diagnose problems with the review team structure because of the general complaints of communication breakdown and limited feedback with the review team (see Appendix B) both of which, according to Espejo (1989) make up the structure of an organisation. It is a tool that diagnoses structural weaknesses in an organisation preventing the flow of information. It also recommends a robust structure with the functions and capacity to maintain it so that review teams are effective and efficient. Solutions from using the VSM are:

- Creating robust coordinating, monitoring, design and policy functions. The coordinating function will be equipped to disseminate information to the team through regular feedback.
- Ensuring all members of the team are available from conception to completion of the project to help guide the process and ensure information is readily accessible when needed. A knowledge base such as websites and emails should be utilised to assist the team to be efficient.
- Ensuring that the choice of selection of the team is based on their knowledge of qualitative problem-solving and complexities of student leadership. Tools such as action learning, affinity diagram and brainstorming will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the project team.

The recommendations were under review at the time I finished this thesis.

This research followed the cycles of abduction, deduction and induction. Abduction and deduction are the problem definition and theory generation stages. Induction is concerned with the immersion of the researcher in the field and the application of the theories. The cycles of abduction, deduction and induction are part of pragmatism. It is concerned with practical experience in the real world. Action learning falls under the pragmatic philosophy due to its emphasis on action and application in the real world.

This research was concerned with changing a situation and was a knowledge-gaining process. Therefore it follows the philosophical foundation of epistemology, which is concerned with how we gain knowledge. It is also my contribution to the SRC in ensuring an effective student leadership and governance.

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List of Abbreviations

CSG:	Commission on Student Governance
ICA:	International Co-operative Alliance
ODG:	Organizational Design and Governance
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SG:	Student Governance
SGR:	Student Governance Review
SP:	Student Parliament
SRC:	Students Representative Council
SSM:	Soft Systems Methodology
VSM	Viable Systems Model
WFSR:	Way Forward for Student Governance Review

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"Science is the tool of the Western mind and with it more doors can be opened than with bare hands. It is part and parcel of our knowledge and obscures our insight only when it holds that the understanding given by it is the only kind there is." C. G. Jung (1875-1961) (Mandef, 2000, p.1)

1. Introduction

This dissertation uses systems thinking to understand the factors that have prevented change from materialising following the Student Governance Review (SGR) of 2001, initiated by the Student Representative Council (SRC) 1999/2000, in the effort to make student governance more co-ordinated so that the SRC can be effective in co-operative governance. It also sheds light on the failure of implementation of the outcomes of the 1970 and 1996 reviews also initiated by the SRC and provides the SRC with solutions and tools to enable it to produce change.

Today's global economy requires co-operative governance to be competitive (Ackoff, 1994; Blair, 1995). The Minister of Education in 1996, after the institution of the new democracy in South Africa, called for more partnerships with universities to increase stakeholder participation and ensure their relevance to civil society (Department of Education, 1996, 1997). At the University of Cape Town (UCT), this necessitated changes to sectors that were previously non-existent or docile (Ncayiyana *et al*, 1999). Management and administration roles had to be equipped. Student sectors that were previously marginalized from mainstream decision-making found themselves as part of a system in which they were now recognised, could partake in decision-making and influence the policies of the university community (ODG, 2000). This, however, brought in new challenges for them, especially the SRC at UCT. It is a constituent that represents all student interests at council level, and that perceives itself as the highest decision-making body in student governance. Partaking in decision-making and influencing policy requires an understanding of both the university and its students, competency and co-ordination amongst the different student constituents. Without these factors in place, the SRC was ineffective in decision-making. The high level of fragmentation between the student sectors and the short-time span of student leadership accentuated this ineffectiveness.

For these reasons, the SRC President of 1999/2000 had the vision of making the SRC more effective by creating the Students Governance Review (SGR) 2001 to improve co-ordination of all the student constituents in order for them to work effectively as one body. He had the support from the SRC president of 2000/1, some past and present student leaders and the Dean of Students. This, however, has not been his vision alone, as the SRC members of 1996/7, and even as long ago as 1970 (WFSGR, 2000)

did attempt to both make the SRC more effective and to improve co-ordination with SG. However these attempts did not succeed in producing the relevant outcomes.

Co-operative governance has been regarded as essential in today's rapidly changing climate. It is a form of governance that requires an organisation to increase its stakeholder participation and decision-making as well as increase partnerships to maintain its relevance to society (Ackoff, 1994; Blair, 1995; Keasey *et al*, 1997; McGregor *et al*, 2000; Ncayayina *et al*, 1999; WFSGR, 2000). Co-operative governance is also maintained by equipping members of an organisation with the relevant tools and by having a culture of continuous improvement so that they can be better informed to make the right choices in their organisation.

However, for its success, it depends on the context in which it is applied. The university context is unique in that it is academic with the sole purpose of producing knowledgeable graduates (ODG, 2000). Universities are also large, complex bureaucratic structures still maintained by traditional thinking, so that the need to transform creates tension between academics, administration and student leadership (Pitman, 2000).

These structures can make any change or transformation difficult, especially that implemented by student leaders who are new in the decision-making system. Using the experience and lessons from the reviews, especially the SGR of 2001, I have, therefore, used a systems approach to understand the factors preventing change and to provide the SRC and student leadership and governance with the requisite tools to be effective and efficient in producing change.

This dissertation is structured around SCQARE, adapted by Ryan (2000), which is a rigorous reading, reviewing and writing strategy. The mnemonic is indicative of the following:

S - situation, C - concern, Q - question, A - answer, R - Rationale and E - evaluation

Situation

The Students Representative Council (SRC) face the challenges of co-operative governance with the University leadership. The application of co-operative governance in universities is a direct result of the dispensation of the new democracy, calling for an increase in stakeholder decision-making and more partnerships with stakeholders to increase relevance to civil society. Thus student leadership and governance, which was previously marginalized from main-stream decision-making in the University, is now recognised as an important stakeholder in decision-making and had the added responsibility of being relevant to the student population and the University leadership. The SRC in spite of its image as

the highest decision-making body of all student constituents, cannot take part fully in co-operative governance due to certain factors such as the lack of co-ordination among all student constituents. In addition, the SRC perceived the university management as bureaucratic with traditional ways of thinking which could constrict their ability to transform to be effective in co-operative governance.

Concern

With the new responsibilities given to the SRC, it is recognised as a legitimate body, on an equal footing with the University leadership in decision-making and able to take part in co-operative governance. Thus the SRC initiated the SGR 2001 to improve its effectiveness in co-operative governance and after planning and research, the SGR 2001 recommendations could not be implemented. This has not been the first failed implementation attempt as there had been two attempts in the past. The lack of implementation of the 2001 review had a negative impact on the viability of the SRC because it reinforced the perception that the SRC was irrelevant to the university community.

Question

The question that arises is what is the best way that the SRC can assist in improving student governance in an institution that is bound by bureaucratic structures and traditional ways of thinking?

Answer

In addressing this question an action learning and systemic approach was taken and these revealed that the SRC may be effective in co-operative governance by first improving the co-ordination and communication channels of student governance. They should be active in their role of engaging in daily rich conversations with other student leaders and the University community to understand the issues and represent students adequately in university governance. Leadership development has thus been emphasised in this research and an action learning approach has been chosen as one of the tools to do this to ensure that appropriate action is taken. Co-ordination also require structural changes such as using the class representatives and having uniform selection/election time for all student bodies.

Improving student governance also requires working with a robust team with proper communication channels and functions so that they can be effective and efficient. Systemic reasoning helped me to design a robust structure that will allow continuous communication and provide the necessary tools to maintain that communication.

Rationale

Systemic reasoning and thought were used to understand the context and the environmental factors at play. Systemic reasoning equips a person to be critical, to look for interacting forces, and to target root causes so that solutions are long-term (Checkland, 1981; Kim, 1992; Sweeney *et al*, 1996; Goodman *et al*, 1997). Thus the systems approach helped me in the process of problem-solving. Systemic thinking is discussed in-depth in Chapter 3. Due to the highly political nature of student leadership and governance, some of the systemic tools were limited in dealing with politics and power. This is beyond the scope of this thesis, but should remain a cause for further research.

Evaluation

This is dependent on the relevance of the topic of concern and the utility of the answer to that topic. The validity of systems thinking is dependent on how well it has addressed the concern within the context. As such, it can be a very useful form of thinking and problem-solving. The evaluation of this process is discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

1.1 Method of Inquiry and Problem-Solving

Systemic tools and methodologies used in inquiry are influenced by their philosophical basis. This thesis takes an epistemological approach using empiricism as the means of acquiring knowledge. Epistemology is concerned with how we gain knowledge and the instruments used to do so (Butler, 1968). One of the instruments for acquiring knowledge, and one on which this research is primarily based, is empiricism with rationalism as a secondary instrument. According to Butler (1968), empiricism is concerned with acquiring knowledge through testing experience. Within empiricism, sense-perception is used to obtain raw data about the environment. Researchers need to immerse themselves in their environment and go through the processes of inference, interpretation and conclusion to gain knowledge about the environment and to ensure that their instruments for acquiring knowledge are sharpened and relevant (Guba, 1985). Rationalism is concerned with making sense of the environment by means of reason. Empiricism, combined with reason, increases the rigour and authority of the knowledge gained.

Pragmatism forms the philosophical foundation of this thesis because of its emphasis on utility and application in the real world. Charles Peirce (Reilly, 1970) describes pragmatism as a philosophy that

offers a practical and rigorous approach to guide the scientific method of inquiry. It is mainly concerned with the consequences of thought and with the improvement of a situation. Pragmatism recognises that material action is a combination and expression of ideas, differing from the other forms of philosophy as its emphasis is on practical and social values that make the world a better place for humans to live in (Butler, 1968). According to Peirce, the pragmatic method of scientific inquiry is concerned with the pursuit of truth. The purpose of inquiry is thus to "remove the irritating stimulus of doubt" (Reilly, 1970, p.15). "Inquiry starts with a doubt" or question and "ends with a belief" or answer (Reilly, 1970, p.15) (see Figure 1). Peirce supports this process as scientific inquiry, which is influenced by observation, and experience, which produces doubt, and by developing explanatory hypotheses to solve the doubt which gives rise to a new set of beliefs.

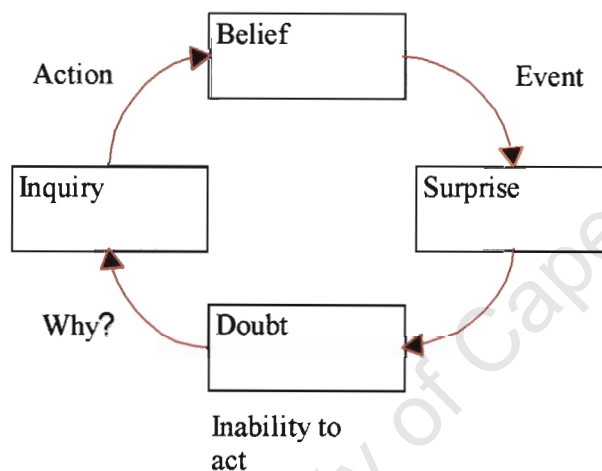


Figure 1: Pragmatism (based on Reilly, 1970)

"Pragmatism's central insight is the connection between knowing the meaning of a hypothesis" and "the consequences" that would arise "if the hypothesis were true" (Ellis, 1998, p.27). Thus, when developing an explanatory hypothesis, the purpose is to know "how we would act rather" than "how we will act" (Reilly, 1970, p.17). Peirce's scientific method of inquiry follows a process of abduction, deduction and induction. These processes were used in this research seen in Figure 2.

Abduction

This aims to make a case for a specific situation by observing an undesirable situation (result), investigating its causes (rule) and creating an explanatory hypothesis (case).

Abduction is the process in which the researcher tries to understand the problem and formulates a tentative hypothesis: this is the problem-formulation phase described in Chapter 2. The hypothesis was generated as a result of application of the action learning framework. The causes were investigated using qualitative data collection techniques, such as participant observations and one-on-one in-depth interviews.

Deduction

This is the process of testing an explanatory hypothesis: the inquirer develops experiential predictions and sees whether the predictions come true. It begins with the rule then developing the hypothesis (case) and predicts the effects of the hypothesis (result).

Deduction is when the researcher generates theories and predicts the consequences of the hypothesis being true: this is the theory-generation phase also described in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. The process of deduction in this thesis consisted of theories depicted in a causal loop diagram (CLD) reflecting causal relationships, evaluating the impact the intervention would have over time in the problem-formulation phase. Deduction was also applied by developing the research framework – the theories surrounding the paradigm, method, methodology and techniques that would be applied in the context.

Induction

Induction tests the hypothesis against experience in the context and draws conclusions about the validity of the hypothesis. In other words, the hypothesis is applied and acted on. Outcomes lead to new hypotheses or beliefs (rule).

Induction is the point when the researcher tests the theories in the real world and evaluates what happens. Induction in this research project covered the process of problem-solving and application in the context. The problem-solving and evaluation phase is described in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

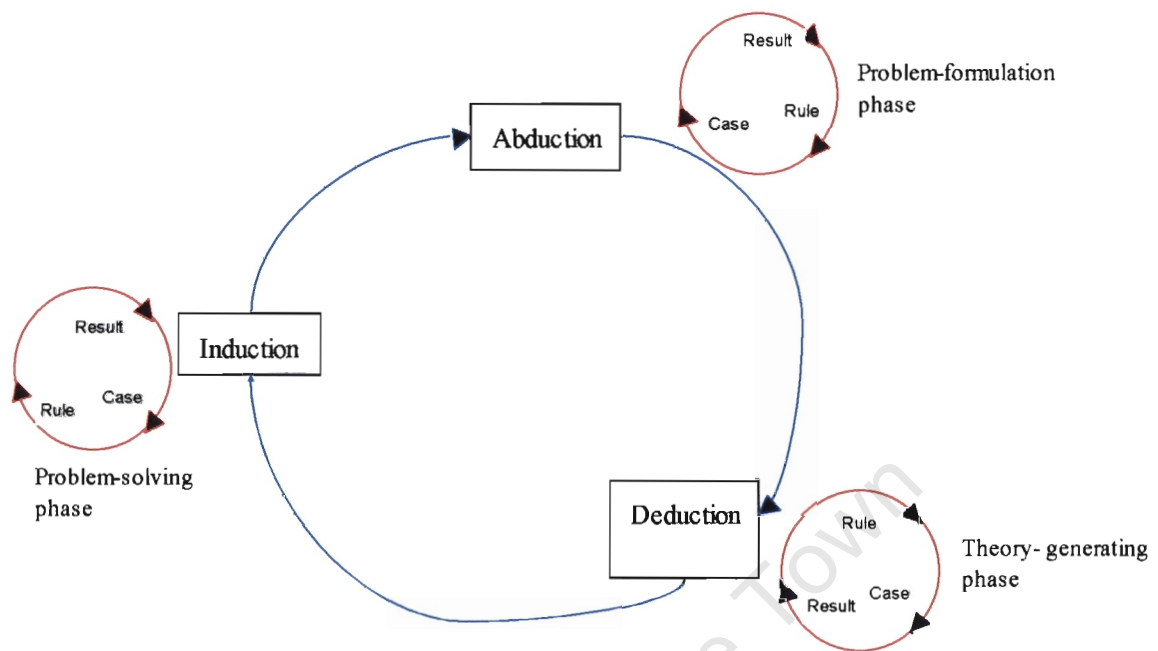


Figure 2: An illustration of the process of abduction, deduction and induction in understanding the SRC's performance through the Student Governance Review (SGR) 2001.

A case is an observation or actual situation; a result is the expected or unexpected consequence; and a rule is a belief.

Pragmatism is not only useful but also relevant for social contexts that are characterised by ambiguous and unclear issues. Qualitative measurements were used because the context was social and complex. I was, therefore, required to capture participants' words and actions to give a true description and representation of the situation as experienced by the participants. Qualitative research aims to understand the meaning that an event has for the participants (Bernard, 2000; Maykut *et al*, 1994; Neuman, 1999). (See Chapter 3 for an in-depth explanation.)

The Action Learning framework was used throughout the research. Action learning follows a learning cycle (Dick, 1993; Peters *et al*, 1998) and one used in this thesis is the Handy's learning cycle (Figure 3). Handy's learning cycle (See Figure 3), developed by Charles Handy, stipulates that learning is always triggered by a question followed by an inquiry into that question, after which theories are formed

(Handy, 1991). These theories are tested and outcomes are reflected on to verify whether or not they validate the theories. To be capable of change and to adapt in a rapidly-changing environment will require that the wheel of learning turns continuously. In other words, it should become a habit to question, form theories, test and reflect.

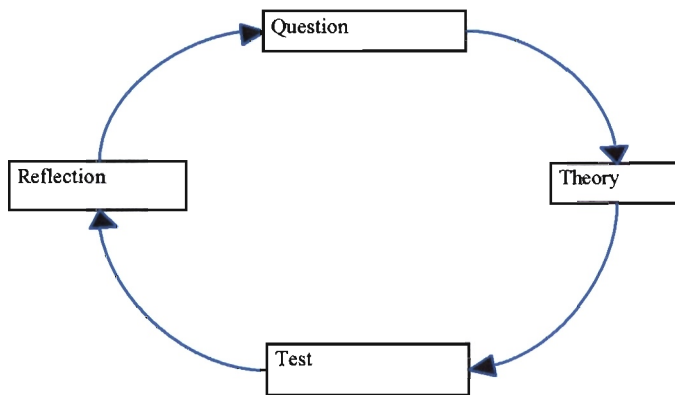


Figure 3: Handy's action learning cycle (Handy, 1991)

Management research consists of practical problems that are “ill-structured and whose solutions are not immediately obvious” (Ryan, 2004, p.2). In this situation a researcher should start by asking herself a “question whose answer” she “hopes will help solve the problem. “But to find that answer, she must pose and solve a problem of another kind, a research problem defined by what it is that she does not know or understand, but feels she must deal with in order to solve the practical problem” (Ryan, 2004, p.2). In much the same way, my learning/research was triggered by the failure to implement the suggestions arising from the SGR, 2001, and my question was “*Why again?*” My practical problem was centred on dealing with the lack of implementation of the SGR 2001. This led me to inquire thoroughly the issues using rigorous problem-solving tools. Through data collection and application of systemic tools like the CLD, it revealed a research problem of focusing on the SRC’s operations on student governance reviews. My testing in the real world was based on data collected by means of participant observation and in-depth interviews and application of the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) and Viable Systems Model (VSM), as well as evaluation through feedback to the stakeholders involved. Lastly, I reflected on the outcomes to see where improvements could be made from this cycle of learning. New questions and theories were then formulated, starting another cycle of learning (See Chapters 7, Section 7.8). A reflection of the outcomes appears in Chapter 7.

The solutions were tested against the experience of certain student leaders. There were constraints in implementing the recommendations. Some of the outcomes of this research were produced in October 2001. Student leaders were at that time rounding off their leadership duties. Although change did not materialise at the time of completion of this thesis, certain aspects were discussed with certain SGR team members and SRC members. It is hoped that the outcome of this will be used for the SRC and student governance in future.

The systems methodologies proved limited in contributing to understanding the highly politicized context of student governance. This political climate proved to be a hindrance to the SRC members in accepting my outcomes (see Chapter 7 Section 7.7) which constrained the actual implementation of the research outcomes. The action learning cycle was completed in that the research process contributed to my own understanding of the situation and ability to intervene. Action learning was therefore relevant, because it increased my understanding of the topic and allowed me to contribute to knowledge. Moreover, this was a personal project intended to increase my own understanding of the situation and to improve my learning.

Systemic thought and reasoning was facilitated by a systems thinking and action learning methodology called the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), which is a rigorous approach and is essential in dealing with complex social problems (Checkland, 1981; Flood *et al*, 1991). It thus aims to provide feasible and desirable solutions by taking into account as many perspectives as necessary and encouraging regular feedback with the stakeholders concerning the situation and outcome (Checkland, 1981). The SSM helped me identify the stakeholders of the system I dealt with. Its rigorous approach enabled me to think out the solutions clearly and recommend relevant solutions through discussion with stakeholders. However, it was inadequate in dealing with the nature of power as student governance is also embedded within a political context.

The Viable Systems Methodology (VSM), another systems thinking tool, was also used in diagnosing structural problems with the review team because of the high complaints of communication issues, operational issues and limited capacity among the team according to the participants interviewed (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2 and Appendix B). Communication, feedback and capacity, according to Espejo and Harnden (1989), comprise the structure of an organisation. Viable systems include five functional elements: policy, intelligence, control, co-ordination and implementation, and these ensure that adequate co-ordination, communication and autonomy are achieved at all levels of an organisation (Beer, 1969; Espejo *et al*, eds., 1989; Flood *et al*, 1991). The VSM also recommends the relevant capacity required for these five functional elements.

Other systems thinking tools in use were the affinity diagram and the Causal Loop Diagram (CLD). These methodologies and tools are briefly explained below. A full description is provided in Chapters 3 to 6.

Causal Loop Diagram (CLD)/Archetypes: This provides visual ways to communicate the interrelationships between dynamic variables (Kim, 1992; Karash *et al*, 1997), showing the circular cause and effect of various factors, or actions, over time. An archetype is a particular type of CLD that helps identify regularly recurring system behaviours in a problem (Goodman *et al*, 1993; Kim, 1992).

I used the CLD to establish how the variables in the problem situation were related, as well as to form theories and to ascertain where intervention could be used to bring about fundamental changes. The archetype that fitted the problem situation was "Shifting the Burden" archetype. This shows how actions to alleviate the problematic symptoms can shift the burden away from a more fundamental solution. This archetype was particularly relevant on account of the history of the SGR attempts, which have effected little change.

Affinity diagram: This is a systems thinking tool used for grouping similar ideas/variables in problem-solving (Ryan, 2000). It is also used for interrelationship diagrams (ID).

Interrelationship Diagram (ID): This diagram, too, is used to illustrate cause and effect, and to reveal the driving forces behind problems or the actions that will bring about lasting change (Ryan, 2000). I used this in the problem-formulation phase (Chapter 2) to unearth the main causes of the problem situation to create a focusing question. It was also used in the problem-solving phase (Chapter 5) to find out where intervention would be necessary.

1.2 Outline of the Thesis

This dissertation follows an action learning cycle, which seeks to bring action/desired change to a problem situation and contribute to knowledge.

Chapter 2 indicates the contextual issues and environment surrounding the need for change in the SRC and SG at the UCT. It presents the problem situation as well as the history of the problem. It also defines the problem examined in this thesis together with the research question and the hypothesis.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, method and techniques that were applied to the problem situation as a means to understand and solve it. These are action learning, the SSM and the VSM. Qualitative research as well as systemic reasoning and thought are explained in detail including qualitative data collection techniques such as participant observation and in-depth interviews.

Chapter 4 presents the application of the VSM and SSM as a means of modelling the entire process and understanding the systemic conditions that inhibit change. The process of sweeping in multiple perspectives using the SSM also creates a holistic perspective through time, revealing the conditions that have added to existing structures that have inhibited change from taking place.

Chapter 5 shows the solutions of the research as a result of using the SSM and VSM, together with solutions recommended by participants. Chapter 6 gives the outcomes from discussion with stakeholders. Chapter 7 presents the evaluation of the study with recommendations for future study and Chapter 8 offers the conclusions.

This chapter has given a brief introduction of the context as well as the methodology, tools and techniques that will be applied in the context. It has also produced a broad generic concern and question which will be scrutinised in detail in Chapter 2. The method of inquiry will be unravelled in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. It has also produced an outline of the Research.

"When a new stage emerges in the evolution of society--as was the case around the midpoint of the century --the continued use of the old paradigm, the old world view lens, creates increasingly more problems. e.g. societal systems, such as our educational activity systems, that still operate based on the design of the bygone era, and use the world view lens of the industrial machine age, are losing their viability. They operate in a continuous crisis mode, and eventually face termination unless they frame a new mind set, learn to use the new lens of the new era, and acquire new thinking that is based on the new world view." (Banathy, 1992, p.4)

2. The Context

Social contexts are composed of people who are complex interacting entities. Therefore the problems that arise within these contexts can be vague and complex. Inability to define the problem can result in the wrong problem being solved and the wrong solution being imposed in the setting. This may lead to further complications or produce disastrous consequences. Thus a crucial step in solving a problem is to define it so that we are able to ask the right questions which if answered will provide us with the knowledge, insight and understanding to solve the problem. There is more than one way of solving a problem and thus there is more than one solution. Problem formulation in this research is illustrated in Figure 6, adapted from Mitroff *et al* (1980). To deal with a problem it is also important that we formulate it as a theory or explanatory hypothesis to show how the co-producers interact to produce the problem. This is illustrated in Figure 8.

It is also important to know the history of the problem which can help reveal a pattern and assist in formulating the problem. The material in this Chapter is based on library research and data from students and student leaders during the Student Governance Review (SGR), 2001, process.

2.1 The Wider Context

Co-operative governance is a system of governance that "recognises..... different stakeholder interests while providing structures..... for negotiation so that those affected by a decision have a say in making the decision either directly or through representatives" (WFSGR, 2000, p.5). It promises to enable participants to be active in mapping out the goals for their organisation (Blair, 1995; McGregor, 2000; ODG, 2000; OECD, 1999; Tricker, 1984). It "acknowledges the existence of competing and complimentary interests in regard to university governance" (Ncayiyana *et al*, 1999, p.3).

In describing co-operative governance I use references that pertain to corporate governance. I wish to make the distinction between the two in this research. Corporate governance is a type of governance that has to do with how power and accountability are allocated among corporate stakeholders. Co-operative governance is a type of governance that has to do with how power and accountability are allocated

among stakeholders in a co-operative (McRitchie, 2005). A co-operative is a partnership and agreement between different organisations that come together to fulfill a goal (ICA, 1996, ODG, 2000). Both forms of governance believe in accountability, transparency of the decision-making process and the input of stakeholders (Blair, 1995; ODG, 2000). However corporate governance focuses on the role and the relationship of the board, managers and shareholders and to a lesser extent other stakeholders and how they all can maximize the wealth of a corporation (McRithchie, 2005) whereas co-operative governance focuses more on the participation of all stakeholders within an organisation, partnerships with other organisations and how they can all maximize the wealth of society as a whole (McRitchie, 2005, ODG, 2000).

Co-operative governance is relevant for universities because one of its aims is to contribute to the public good and to maintain relevance to society (ODG, 2000). By securing partnerships with public interest groups, government and commercial enterprises, the university can maintain its relevance to society by producing individuals with the relevant knowledge and skills to strengthen the country's infrastructure.

Ackoff (1994) describes an organisation's environment to consist of its customers, owners, investors, service providers and debtors. An organisation's environment, therefore, is made of all those directly and indirectly impacted by the output of the organisation (see Figure 4). On account of the explosion of information in the 21st century, organisations need to form networks so that knowledge can be shared and information improved to maintain a competitive edge (ODG, 2000). Part of forming networks will be to increase participation and enter into partnerships with the relevant organisations.

According to Bavly (1999), co-operative governance requires greater accountability and transparency in the organization's activities so that they can be monitored to adhere to the objectives. Accountability is the acknowledgement of responsibility and thus co-operative governance is based on the premise that participants perform better when they are held to account for what they do (Bavly 1999).

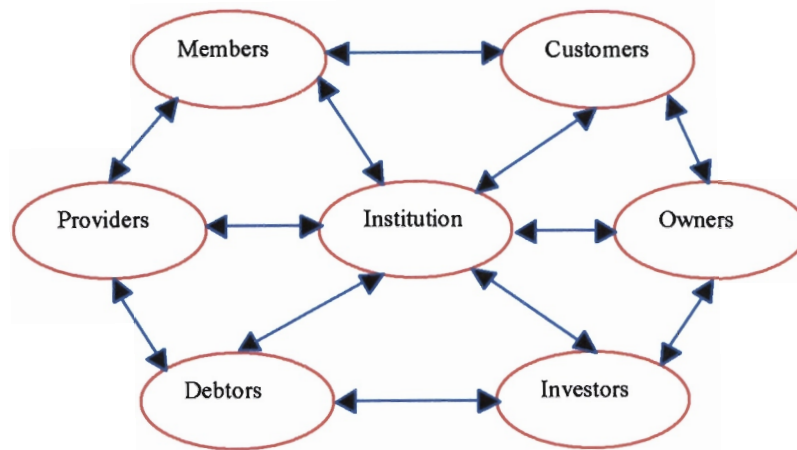


Figure 4: An illustration of the relationships among stakeholders in an organisation (adapted from Ackoff, 1994)

Past thinking of governance has placed too much emphasis on the relationship between managers and stakeholders. An indication of a manager's success was how he increased the turnover of an organisation and the criterion for success was based on fiduciary return (Keasey *et al*, 1997; Blair, 1995). Shareholders were major owners of organisations, and, as a result, employees were sidestepped (Keasey *et al*, 1997; Blair, 1995). This created environments where innovation and growth were stifled because there was no emphasis on workers or employees. According to Bavly, 1999, however, past models were also limited because the managers' operations were overlooked, resulting in situations where they could abuse the system. Heads of institutions were totally responsible and structured systems became hierarchical as workers were not part of major decisions (Blair, 1995; ODG, 2000). In the case of universities, much power was vested in the board, that is, the council with members of the council taken from the state, and local government (Ncayiyana *et al*, 1999). The university community was not adequately represented and did not have access to council decisions (Department of Education, 1996, 1997). According to the ODG, 2000, report, this created situations where universities were ineffective and inefficient, leading to slow decision-making processes. In the information era, this was not sustainable as there was a need for a speedy response to the environment to maintain viability. Thus democratically structures were created where power and decision-making were distributed throughout an organisation thus creating decentralised structures to remove the burden of overload and ensure a quick response to needs (Blair, 1995; ODG, 2000). Hence the essence of co-operative is self-help and self-development where members of an organisation are given the choice to make a decision (ICA, 1996).

Shared and co-operate governance is based on the following principles according to Ackoff (1994), Blair (1995), Ncayiyana *et al* (1999), McGregor (2000), ODG (2000) and Tricker (1984):

- **Greater accountability and transparency:** Governance of an organisation should be democratic, characterized by “mutual respect, tolerance and the maintenance of a well ordered and peaceful life” (ODG, 2000, p.38). It requires that the decision-making processes are transparent and those taking and implementing decisions are accountable in how they perform their duties and use resources.
- **Increase in participation and representation of the activities of the organisation.** Co-operative governance requires greater participation of members in the organisation’s decision-making and influencing of policy. In this way, members can feel a sense of ownership in influencing the organisation's goals. They can participate directly or indirectly through representation where committees are formed to represent the diversity of interests in the organisation.
- **Changing roles, responsibilities and building capacity.** The requirements of co-operative governance are that responsibilities be matched to maintain their effectiveness. Ackoff and Blair describe creating mechanisms as building the intellectual property of an organisation by improving the skills and competencies of individuals and the ways in which they do their job.
- **Promoting interaction and networks through partnerships.** This should be based on “the recognition ofdifferent interests and the..... contestation among them” (ODG, 2000, p.38). With the correct structures in place, differences can be negotiated in “participative and transparent ways” (ODG, 2000, p.38). The networks formed increase the accuracy of information to empower members of an organisation to make appropriate decisions and encourage knowledge sharing which is beneficial for problem-solving. This also increases innovation due to new skills acquired.

The rate of adoption of these principles is different between corporations and universities. There has been a plethora of information of co-operative governance in corporations and how they seem better fit to apply and practice these principles at a faster rate than universities. I wish to outline certain distinguishing characteristics according to Sporn, 1999 and Pitman, 2000

Characteristics	Corporations	Universities
Goals	Characterised by uniform goals. All members work together to fulfill the goal of the	Characterised by ambiguous and vague goals to accommodate the diverse groups of external and

	organisation with fiscal benefits being one of the sustaining and motivating factors.	internal constituencies (students, student governance, academic, university governance, and administration). Because students are now part of university governance, two different structures exists, paid and voluntary system (students). Voluntary systems are sometimes difficult to manage.
Service	Corporations exist to produce a product for the market. The nature of the product is to satisfy the market. It takes a shorter time to materialize a product to be utilized by the market. Processes to materialise the product are simpler.	Universities are people processing institutions with the nature of the product being knowledgeable graduates. Takes approximately three to seven years to materialise the product. Processes to materialize the product are more complex. Institutions also have to ensure that the knowledge generated is relevant to the social world.
Nature of organisation	Structures exist to serve clients. Different forms of corporations exist – large bureaucratic to small and dynamic however all operated by uniform goals.	Universities are characterised by structures with complex and fragmented agendas covering university governance, student governance, academics and administration. Different constituencies exist to deal with the different agendas each requiring pressing attention.
Organisational structure	Different departments exist for example human resources, marketing, research and development and sales. Co-operative governance can be applied by forming committees which include representatives from each of the departments.	Two issues arise with organisational structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Different power structures and interest groups dominate governance and decision-making. Challenges arise to accommodate all needs. (2) Dual or triple organisation structures exist between administration, academic and students. The tensions that arise between these three structures are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Students perceive administration as bureaucratic. (b) Administration

		<p>perceive students as customers and not equals in decision-making</p> <p>(c) Academics demand autonomy from their work and administration works according to bureaucratic rules and regulations. Thus tensions arise between bureaucratic expectations and professional values.</p>
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Table 1: Characteristic differences between universities and corporations

The adoption ability of any organisation depends on the way change is introduced to the organisation (Kotter, 1996).

2.2 Change Management

Change management can be defined as the applicability and maintenance of the change (Kotter, 1996). Senge (1994) points out that the challenges and successes of change in any organisation lies in understanding the forces and the underlying structures at play. He argues that rather than focus on isolated events, it is best to find out patterns that produce similar events and if so there is an underlying force at play (Bounds, 1989, Senge, 1994). He suggests a way to bring about effective change is understand the system and in so doing look for high leverage changes. Change can also pose a threat to many individuals and when not handled properly can result in a lack of morale or persistence to the status quo.

2.2.1 Dealing with Resistances to Change

Kotter (1996) identifies different ways of dealing with the resistances. These are explained in Table 2.

Approach	Commonly used in situations	Advantages	Drawbacks
Education and Communication	Where there is a lack of information or inaccurate information and analysis.	Once persuaded, people will often help with the implementation of the change.	Can be time consuming if lots of people are involved
Participation and involvement	Where the initiators do not have the information they need to design the change and where others have considerable power to resist.	People who participate will be committed to implementing change and any relevant information they have will be integrated into the plan.	Can be very time consuming if participators design an appropriate change
Facilitation and support	Where people are resisting because of adjustments problems	No other approach works well with adjustment problems	Can be time consuming, expensive and still fail
Negotiation and agreement	Where someone or some group will lose out in a change and where that group has considerable power to resist	Sometimes it is a relatively easy way to avoid major resistance	Can be too expensive in many case if it alerts others to negotiate for compliance
Manipulation and co-option	When other tactics will not work or are too expensive	It can be a relatively quick and inexpensive solution to resistance problems	Can lead to future problems if people feel manipulated
Explicit and implicit coercion	Where speed is essential and the change initiators posses considerable power	It is speedy and can overcome any kind of resistance	Can be risky if it leaves people mad at the initiators.

Table 2: Kotter's approaches to dealing with change

Change agents fail at change programs because they lack the ability to apply different strategies and stick to only one change method (Kotter, 1996). Campbell et al (1991) mention that organisations consist of embedded personal and organisational belief systems. Action is guided by these belief systems. These tend towards stable formations and people feel threatened when these stable formations are changing a lot. Senge (1994) talks about an implicit goal system which the organisation tries to maintain and until this is found change agents will be unsuccessful in producing change. A way to deal with this proposed by Campbell, 1991, is the level of continuous feedback to and from clients and the ability of the change agents to allow the clients to see alternatives and make new connections.

2.3 The Transforming landscape of co-operative governance in universities

Since the beginning of the 21st century, co-operative governance has been practised in universities as a means of sustainability, due to the democratisation of institutions. In South Africa, the need for co-operative governance in universities was motivated by issues related to transparency and democracy and the need to produce a coordinated system and increase efficiency of decision-making. Hitherto, universities in South Africa were governed by a model based on differentiation: different education departments were responsible for different universities, the outcome of which was an "inefficient, fragmented system" (Department of Education, 1996, p.7, 1997). Universities were run and governed by members of the Council, which promoted the Government's interests and limited participation in university matters by students and workers (Ncayiyana *et al*, 1999).

The pressures of globalisation and democracy created conditions where universities were forced to compete for resources as government control and subsidies decreased. Universities were now fighting for a balance between the need to be an academic institution as well as to be business-like (ODG, 2000). Improved public accountability was needed to secure government funding. Universities also had the obligation to commit to a common good. Partnerships between universities and civil society were formed so that universities could enhance their relevance to society (CHE, 2000; Department of Education, 1997; ODG, 2000). A greater number of students therefore had to be recruited from a broader range of social groups (CHE, 2000; Department of Education, 1996, 1997; ODG, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2001).

The application of co-operative governance in universities was backed by the Minister of Education in 1996 when he proposed that governance be split into three levels - a council, a senate and a student council - to provide for increased stakeholder consultation and participation in decision-making (Department of Education, 1996, 1997). At the University of Cape Town students are represented in the council through the Students Republic Council (SRC). This immediately put it in the forefront with the dual role of making decisions for the university and understanding student requirements.

2.4 Student Leadership and Governance at the University of Cape Town

Student governance has been defined as the structures and processes that reflect and guide the needs of the students, execute key functions and provide guidance and leadership for student activities (CSG report, 1997). It comprises different sectors: the academic sector, made up of class representatives and

faculty councils, which deal with student interests in the faculties; the residence sector, consisting of house committees, which handle student affairs in the residences; clubs and societies, comprising of sports, religious, political and other extra-curricular organisations, dealing with extra curricula activities; the SRC and the SP, which represent students and make decisions at council level. Currently these sectors operate independently and are not under one SG body. The SRC is seen as the highest decision-making body in student governance.

Co-operative governance has presented numerous challenges for the student leaders in relation to university governance (WFSGR, 2000). Representation in the council requires knowledge of the history of the University and an understanding of the issues discussed in order to contribute effectively to policy. This has been a challenge to them as they are in the system only for a brief period, and are often too overburdened by academic and leadership demands to play a meaningful role in university committees. This results in a lack of interest, de-motivation and non-attendance at meetings. Some student leaders believe that issues, such as a lack of incentives, also play a role in this. This becomes a vicious circle in which student leaders, by the time they begin to familiarize themselves with their tasks, have to hand over to new student leadership. New student leaders then have to learn the system. The lack of continuity of leadership and unavailability at certain meetings is a matter of concern to university management who perceives the student leaders as inexperienced in the university system with little understanding of university matters.

The SRC, in particular, is constantly confronted with challenges from overloaded schedules. It has the dual role of managing and executing Student Parliament (SP) policy, and of representing students in institutional policy. As there is a lack of co-ordination between constituents who deal with students at grass roots level, the SRC cannot truly represent students or contribute effectively to policy-making.

Student governance in relation to university governance, is seen in Figure 5.

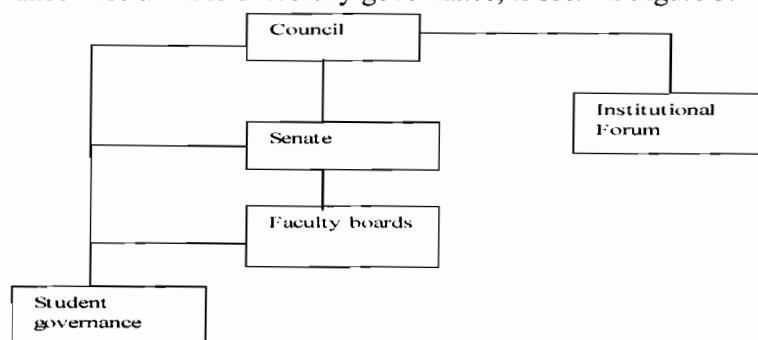


Figure 5: Illustration of the different levels of decision-making at the University of Cape Town adapted from the ODG report (2000).

The diagram shows that student constituents are represented in all the levels of university management and leadership.

The following constituents, based on the ODG report, 2000, comprise the university governance:

Council: This is the highest decision-making body of public institutions. It is responsible for the overall governance of the institution. It comprises the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellors, and representatives of the Senate, the SRC and civil society. The Council aims to bridge the gulf between administration and the academic. It cannot, however, carry out any decisions pertaining to academic matters without the consultation of the Senate.

Senate: The Senate is concerned with the academic side of the university, and organises and controls teaching, curricula, syllabi, research and examinations. It is accountable to the Council and is made up of the Vice-Chancellor, representatives of the Faculty Boards and representatives of the SRC.

Faculty Boards: These are accountable to the Senate and carry out the work of the Senate at Faculty level. They comprise heads of departments, deans and some academic staff.

Institutional Forum: This includes members of the University leadership, staff, SRC and outside bodies. It checks, balances and advises the Council on the implementation of the Higher Education Act and co-operative governance.

Student Governance: This pertains to all student structures on campus and the proper operation and governance of all student constituencies. Students are represented at all the levels of decision-making by student leadership and governance.

2.5 The Process of Problem Formulation

Applied research is initiated by a “practical problem where an essential variable has moved out of its acceptable limits” (Ryan, 2004, p.1). To deal with a practical problem, explanatory hypothesis have to be formulated that shows the interactions of the producers of the variable (Ryan, 2004). For complex and ill- structured problems, problem formulation is a process that involves first sensing the existence of the problem, then identifying the contributing factors and finally reaching a definition of the problem (Mitroff, 1980). The process is illustrated in Figure 6. The practical problem was initiated by the failure

to accept the outcomes of the SGR 2001, a project initiated by the SRC to improve co-ordination in student governance. Therefore my initial concern was on the issue of the SGR 2001 process with a system in place preventing the acceptance and implementation of the outcomes. I then proceeded to understand the issue by establishing the context in which the issue lies and understanding its history as there was a pattern of failed implementation of SGR projects initiated by the SRC.

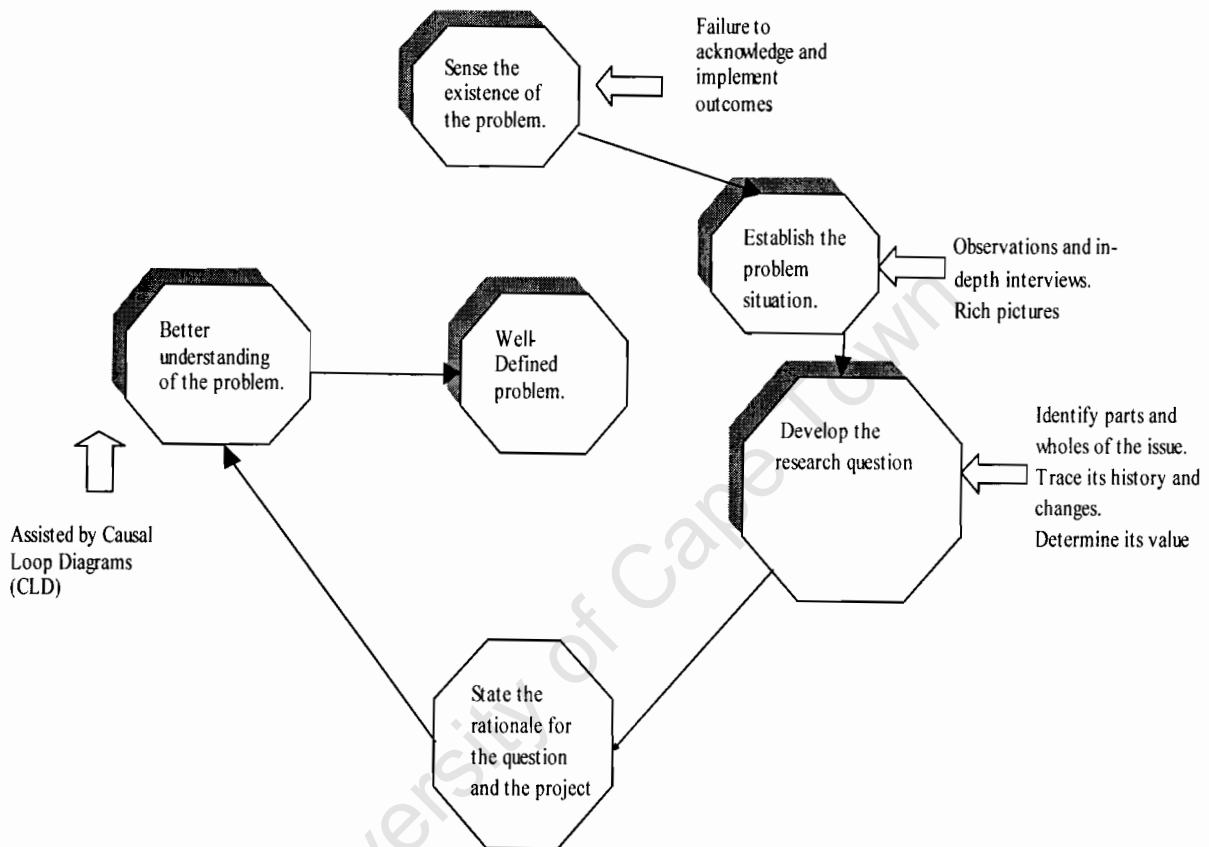


Figure 6: Illustration of the process of problem formulation (based on Mitroff, 1980)

2.5.1 History of attempts to improve student governance

I chose this research because the new model that was derived from the SGR 2001 was not implemented and I was a project leader for one of the review teams. This attempt, together with previous attempts by the SRC, resulting in little or no change, compelled me to investigate the history of reviews. The following is the relevant history that developed from my observations in meetings, discussions with past and present student leaders, and reports.

Attempts to improve student governance were re-established in 1996, (WFSGR, 2000) when the SRC failed to reach the polls of the previous year; a Commission of Student Governance (CSG) was accordingly appointed to review student governance. The CSG comprised members of a transitional student council, selected to fulfill some of the functions of the SRC although limited in their activities, because they were not a legitimate SRC. This review was completed in 1997 but certain recommendations could not be implemented due to time constraints, resources deficiencies and a lack of a clear implementation plan. The recommendation that could be implemented, however, was the sabbatical officer system. This issue was readily accepted because SRC members could not cope with the unrelenting demands of their academic work and their SRC work. Three paid posts were then made available from 1998 to those who would dedicate a year to full-time service for the SRC.

In 1998, the University launched the AIMS project (Audit and Integration of Management Systems) to review governance at UCT but did not include a review of student governance. In 1999, the leadership of the SRC and the Dean of Students requested the expertise of AIMS to review student governance. To prevent a similar outcome, they had first to investigate ways of conducting an effective review to ensure that the intended changes could be implemented.

The SGR 2001 was a project of the SRC primarily to improve co-ordination in student governance so that the SRC could be effective in co-operative governance of the university and secondarily to target the factors preventing viability in student governance and finally, to propose changes in student leadership and governance. With support and finance given to the project, the AIMS consultant, certain SRC student leaders of 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 and the Dean of Students assisted with the strategic planning of the review. The main priority was therefore not only to identify problems within student governance, but also to recommend solutions that would make the review team effective and efficient in producing a feasible model.

Plans were drawn up to meet any challenges that might arise. First of all, it was proposed that six project teams be created, each one to investigate a different problem area – representation, structural interrelationships, capacity and incentives, ownership and participation, finance, or electoral systems. To ensure that the SGR process becomes more inclusive to the wider student body, representatives from the Faculty councils, house committees and other student societies would join the project teams.

Secondly, there would need to be structural adjustments in order to increase communication and accountability within the University community. There should be in place institutional support from the university governance for the SGR 2001 so that it might be recognised as an important issue on the

University agenda. This had been ignored in previous SGR attempts. The Dean of Students would be part of the review team, and resources and administrative capacity would be provided by the student development service department.

Thirdly, a steering committee comprising the Dean, past and previous student members of the SRC and SP should be established to oversee and guide the SGR. Detailed plans and terms of reference should be drawn up and an administrator should co-ordinate the activities of the project teams.

The review process commenced in April 2001, and the project lasted six months. The six project teams were then assigned to investigate the different problem areas and the outcomes of the review were synthesized by the co-ordinator and two members of the steering committee. The new model was then presented, at a conference in October 2001, (in which I participated) to the project leaders, a member of the student development service department and some past/current student leaders. It received considerable resistance, with complaints about its lack of simplicity. The incoming SRC members did not understand the new model. In 2002, the review had been discarded and there was no evidence of the intended change.

However, it appeared that the 2001 SGR team has been effective in planning for the review and carrying out the project. The initial concern was how could the SRC initiate and carry out projects of this nature and bring about a successful implementation?

2.5.2 Situation Unstructured

In presenting an unstructured view of the situation, it serves to illustrate the relationship between the contributing factors and the problems with the SGR 2001, without any analysis or judgement. The contributing factors were identified through participant observation in the SGR 2001 process and informal, open-ended, in-depth interviews with certain members of the SGR 2001, and members of the SRC of 2000, 2001 and 2002. Nine people in all were interviewed. Answers from these interviews and observations are outlined in Appendix B, while a summarised version appears in this Chapter. Initial observations and discussions led me to investigate why the SGR 2001 outcome was met with much resistance and to review the process and participants perceptions thereof.

From interviews with SG and SGR 2001 members, as well as observations, it was apparent that the SGR 2001 was a personal project of the SRC and not all of the student constituents therefore certain student

leaders did not want to participate in the process. The greatest impact of dysfunctional student governance is felt at SRC level - the SRC is regarded as the most important decision-making body in student governance. Its practical role, however, is to manage policy created by the SP and to represent students at Council level. There is confusion between the two structures concerning their roles and which of them is the most important body. Representation of the SRC at Council level is stifled on account of the independence and self-sufficiency of other student constituents. Contextual issues, such as the fragmentation between the SRC, the SP, other student constituents and the university management, the bureaucracy of the university, the student perception of the SRC's inability to meet its promises, and the general apathy of the University community regarding the SRC, have persisted over time and have constantly hindered the SRC. The SRC fire-fights continually, without meeting the needs of the students. It also lacks mechanisms to communicate effectively with the students.

Observations also revealed a pattern of little or lack of implementation of the outcomes of student governance reviews initiated by the SRC. The SRC members of 1970, and 1996/7 (WFSGR, 2000) did attempt to make the SRC more effective and to improve co-ordination with SG. However these attempts did not fully succeed in producing the relevant outcomes.

In my interviews with members of the SGR 2001 about the process, they expressed dissatisfaction about the way in which the process was managed in terms of insufficient time and the level of communication among the teams. They met sporadically within their various teams and were not clear about the whole process. Some wanted to see how the different areas of investigation were connected. There was, however, little platform for this. Others complained about the non-availability of their project leaders. There were also issues about the level of capacity of the team. The co-ordinator and certain project leaders under-estimated the extent of the work required, and could therefore not produce the necessary outcomes on time because of pressing academic demands. The administrative capacity that some required, and ideally should have been given, was lacking. Project leaders complained about the tardiness of the process and structural issues within the team, such as the non-availability of the coordinator. This weakened the commitment and motivation of a number of SGR team members. In addition, there was little guidance and interaction between teams and the steering committee.

The final stage of the review involved the synthesising of all reports by the co-ordinator and two members of the steering committee. The communication, both during the review and at the final stages, was poor. Some project leaders were not aware how the members of the steering committee arrived at the new model. Others felt that personal agendas were pushed. There was no time at meetings for appropriate questioning of the process and model.

Moreover, the interviews which formed part of the SGR 2001 project were also not sufficiently in-depth, on account of the time factor, and the need to obtain as much information as possible from the interviewees concerning their area of investigation.

There was general apathy towards the whole process. From participant observation at conferences, I was aware that historical issues had an effect on the SGR 2001. Tension from the SRC and SP had spilled over to the SGR. One SP member reported that the SP was apprehensive because it had not been informed of the whole process from the outset. There were personality clashes as these leadership positions also impacted to the extent that less support was received by the SGR2001. Apathy increased further among SG members, who complained of a lack of transparency in the selection of project leaders. Some felt that membership in SG was imperative for a full understanding of its complexity. Historical issues such as the negative perception of the SRC also impacted on less support and participation received from the University management and students by the SGR 2001.

The outcomes of the SGR were not readily accepted by student leaders. They labelled the model as complex and irrelevant to students' needs. One of its requirements was that the SRC be head of all student bodies. This would mean further responsibility for the SRC members, who also have to focus on academics; it might also stifle the independence of other student bodies. This resulted in a general lack of understanding. The SGR 2001 process was actually perceived as flawed before the final model/outcomes were presented.

A detailed description of the interviews and observations appears in Appendix B. As the contributing factors were numerous, multiple sources of data were used to obtain a clear picture.

A rich picture will also be used to understand the significance of the issue and help in articulating and formulating the research question. A rich picture is used to illustrate the interrelated factors at play in the problem situation based on the information gathered. This is a cartoon-like representation that summarises the situation.

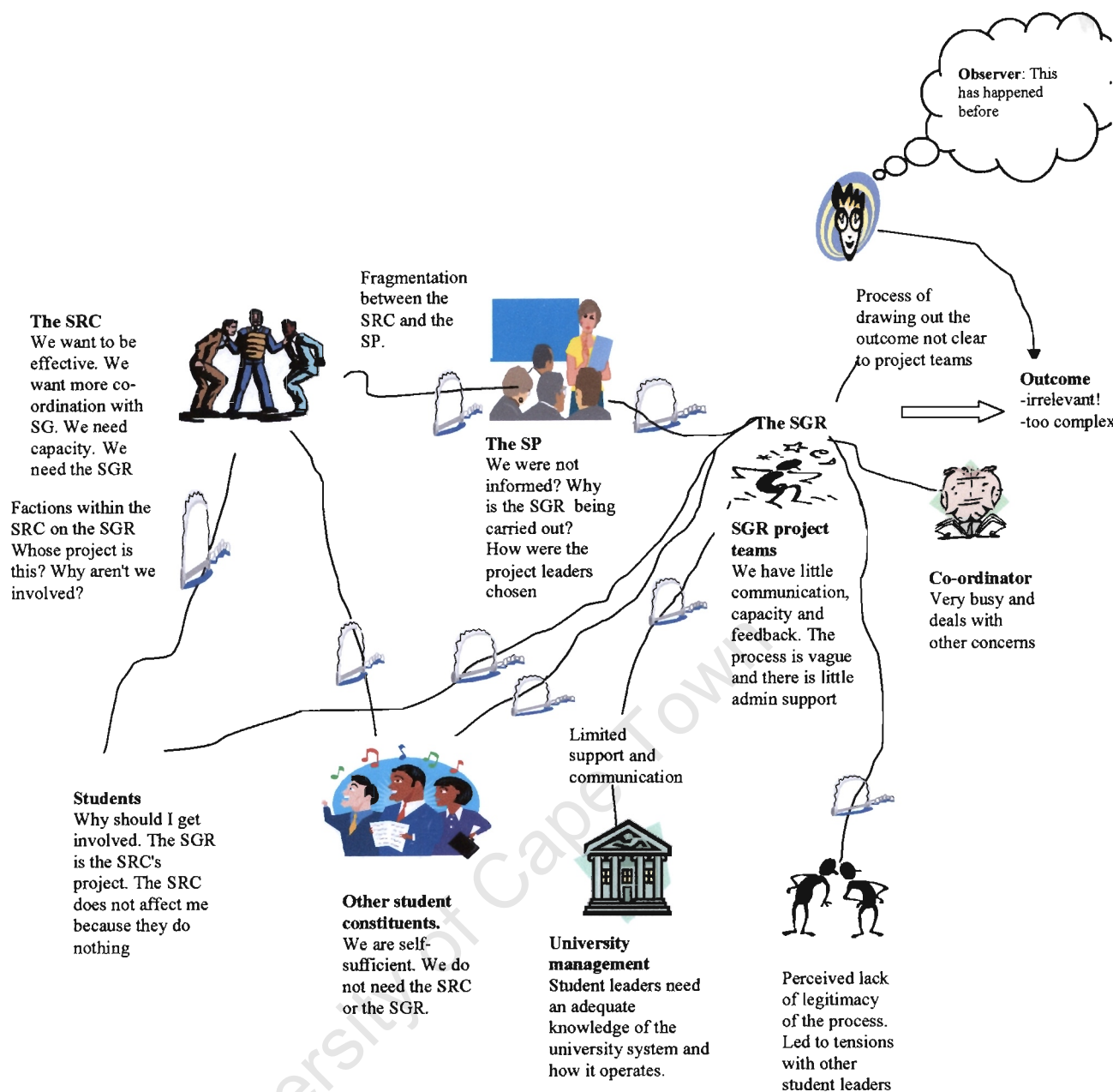


Figure 7: Rich Picture of the dynamics affecting the 2001 student governance review.

The major themes resulting from the problem situation are grouped using the affinity diagram see Appendix B. A Causal Loop Diagram (CLD) will now be used to demonstrate how these variables interact to produce the problem behaviour and assist in articulating the research question and its significance. It will also be used to enhance understanding of the feedback loops that reinforce the problem and assist in designing hypothetical interventions to help solve the problem. When designing the CLD, new links were added to illustrate the problem situation more fully, based on the data (Appendix B). The CLD was then used to unearth the systemic structures and provide usable theory.

2.5.3 Understanding the student governance review issues using a Causal Loop diagram

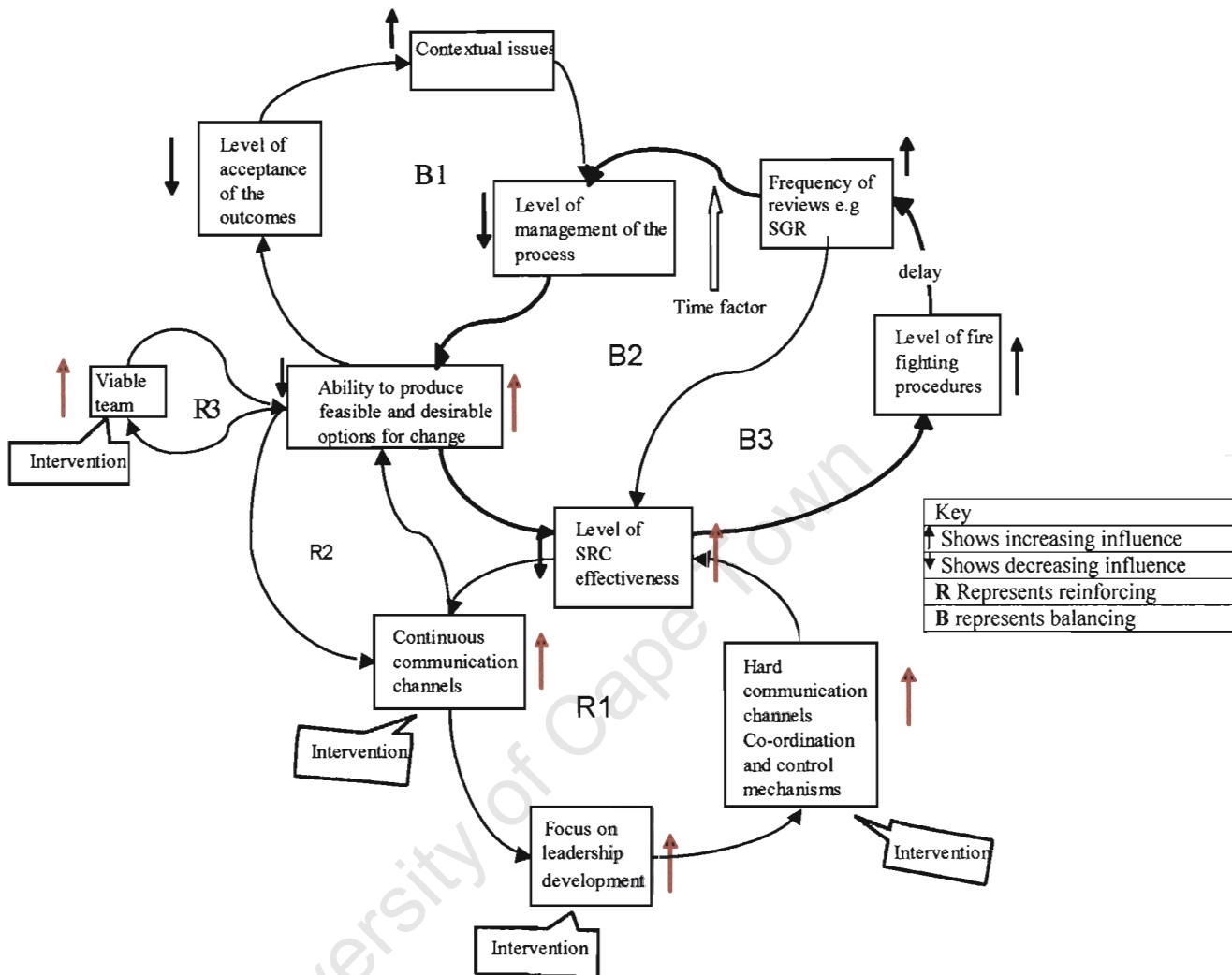


Figure 8: CLD to illustrate the factors contributing to the problem situation

The CLD was most reflective of the addiction archetype (Goodman, 1993; Karash, 1997; Kim, 1994), also known as “shifting the burden” where the ineffectiveness of the SRC is “solved” through the efforts of the SGR.

2.5.4 The Research question

A research question seeks to find out “what a researcher needs to know and understand in order to deal with a practical problem” (Ryan, 2004, p.7).

Thus the research question is why do projects undertaken by the SRC to review and resolve student governance result in little or no implementation?

2.5.5 The Concern

I have now developed a better understanding of the issue. From interviews, observations and application of the systems thinking tools, the concern has evolved from dealing solely with the SGR 2001 to looking at the SRC’s operations on student governance reviews.

2.5.6 The Rationale

This motivates the question and explains why it is important to ask the question at all. The motivation behind the question is to understand alternative ways the SRC can improve student governance that will enable them to be effective in co-operative governance.

2.5.7 The Research Problem

A research problem exposes the significance of a research to the researcher and to others. It consists of “what the research is about - the concern, what the researcher doesn’t know about it – the question and why the researcher wants to know about it – the rationale” (Ryan, 2004, p.7). The problem with the question and rationale has been identified as such:

I am studying the SRC’s operations on the SGR because I want to find out why projects taken by the SRC result in little or no implementation in order to understand alternative ways the SRC can improve student governance that will enable them to be effective in co-operative governance.

2.6 Explanatory Hypothesis

The CLD shows the leverage areas for the SRC is to improve their co-ordination/communication channels and develop leadership capacity. Developing leadership capacity will provide them with the skills and tools to communicate effectively with the University community. Improving "hard" communication, co-ordination and control mechanisms indicates a need for structural changes, such as SRC members being chosen from the SP to improve communication and co-ordination between them and between the SP and other student bodies. It will also involve recognizing the class representatives as important stakeholders in student governance and utilizing them as they can reach a wider range of students.

The bureaucratic structures of the University affect the way student governance is run. Student and University governance work within different structures and do not co-operate successfully. University management's negative perception of student governance is inevitable, due to a limited time period of student leaders, but this could become positive with the introduction of good co-ordination and communication mechanisms between them.

Loop B1 shows that the inability to produce feasible and desirable options for change results in a low level of acceptance of the outcomes. This then reinforces contextual issues such as apathy and the university community's negative perception of the SRC. These contextual issues also affect the SRC's ability to manage the process, which in turn hampers its ability to produce feasible options for change.

Loop B2 demonstrates that as the level of fire-fighting procedures in the SRC increases so does the frequency of the reviews. Bearing in mind the limited time factor dedicated to each review, this has a negative effect on the level of management of the process which, in turn, hampers the SRC's ability to produce feasible and desirable options for change. This reinforces the SRC's ineffectiveness and it retreats into fire-fighting mode.

Loop B3 reveals that in order to improve their effectiveness, the SRC gets into a fire-fighting mode and over time arranges more SGRs. This reinforces its ineffectiveness when outcomes are not implemented and then it retreats into fire-fighting mode.

Loop R1 indicates where intervention is necessary to effect change - continuous communication channels including a focus on leadership development and building the "hard" communication channels. Rather than sporadic events like the SGR, the SRC should have a mechanism for continuous "soft"

communication within student governance. The SGR is an ambitious project that aims to target the whole range of student leaders. The sample size and the short time span make changes difficult. "Soft" continuous communication channels means that the SRC engage in rich conversations/interactions with student leaders so that they can understand the issues within student governance. Leadership development will provide the SRC with the tools to improve the hard communication channels, that is co-ordination and control with the other student constituents, which then improves their effectiveness.

Loop R3 indicates that the soft continuous communication will lead to feasible options for change. Loop R4 shows another intervention point. The SRC should create a viable team of change agents to produce feasible options for change.

In the long term, the SRC may not need to control other student sectors or organise reviews on a large scale once good communication and co-ordination are established. It will play a more executive role of co-ordinating SG and representing students adequately in institutional policy and at Council level. The continuous leadership development will ensure that they possess the knowledge to understand the complexities of the University. The effectiveness of the SRC will increase, thereby reducing the contextual issues of apathy and lack of support from University management/leadership.

This chapter has revealed the process of unearthing the problem. Using systems thinking in the process of problem formulation has proved effective, because it targeted the problem from a different angle. I have also increased my understanding of the situation and seen that SGR attempts will always prove ineffective unless fundamental solutions are addressed. These include improving communication channels, increasing co-ordination mechanisms between student constituents, and focusing on leadership development. Working with a viable and robust team will also help to bring about change. Intervention is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

"The systems view looks at the world in terms of relationships and integration. Systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller units. Instead of concentrating on basic building blocks or basic substances, the systems approach emphasizes basic principles of organization. Every organism- from the smallest bacterium through the wide range of plants and animals to humans is an integrated whole and thus a living system. ...But systems are not confined to individual organisms and their parts. The same aspects of wholeness are exhibited by social systems- such as an anthill, a beehive, or a human family- and by ecosystems that consist of a variety of organisms and inanimate matter in mutual interaction. What is preserved in a wilderness area is not individual trees or organisms but a complex web of relationships between them." (Capra, 1982, p.266)

3. The Research Framework

This Chapter describes the research framework consisting of the research methodology, methods and data collection. A framework discusses on a conceptual level the functions and understanding of the methodology, methods and data collection that guides a research. It is also an opportunity to state assumptions by arguing a philosophical framework. A research method "is a strategy of inquiry which moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to research design and data collection" (Myers, 1997). The choice of research method influences the way in which the researcher collects data. The research method used in this dissertation is action learning. The framework is illustrated in Figure 9.

The diagram illustrates that this research was fueled by a practical problem of no acceptance of the SGR 2001 outcomes. Stage one of the framework involves understanding the practical problem and the situation in which it lies. Because the problem was complex and embedded in a human activity system, qualitative data collection techniques were used to understand the situation, its wider context and formulate the concern. As qualitative measurements are subjective and not devoid of the values of the researcher, it was important that a paradigm be used to view that situation as holistic as possible. Systems thinking was the paradigm used and the situation was understood using the systems thinking methodology, the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). This helped in understanding the situation by identifying its stakeholders and obtaining multiple perspectives of the problem.

Stage two requires formulating a research problem to deal with the underlying causes of the practical problem. It involves providing the research answer and using the knowledge gained to develop an actionable plan for solving the practical problem. Systems thinking tools such as the affinity diagram and causal loop diagram (CLD) helped me to refine and formulate the concern, research question and thus the research problem. The research answer consists of the theoretical knowledge and understanding to deal with the research question (Ryan, 2004). This took the form of the explanatory hypotheses and was done using the CLD (See chapter 2 section 2.3.3).

Actionable knowledge, which is “knowledge required to implement the research answer in the real world” (Ryan, 2004, p.10), was developed from the data collected and using the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) and the Viable Systems Model (VSM), a systems thinking model. These served to diagnose, understand and recommend practical solutions that will help deal with the underlying causes of the practical problem. The SSM also provided the means to discuss the outcomes with some stakeholders. Both the SSM and the VSM are systemic and relevant to use in complex, social contexts.

Data collection techniques range from interviews, observational techniques such as participant observation and fieldwork, through to written data sources (Maykut *et al*, 1994; Myers, 1997). The techniques applied to this research were participant observation, in-depth interviews and reports. The framework is embedded in empiricism which involves a researcher immersing herself/himself into her/his environment and using the sense-perception to collect data about the environment, to observe, interpret the data and form conclusions.

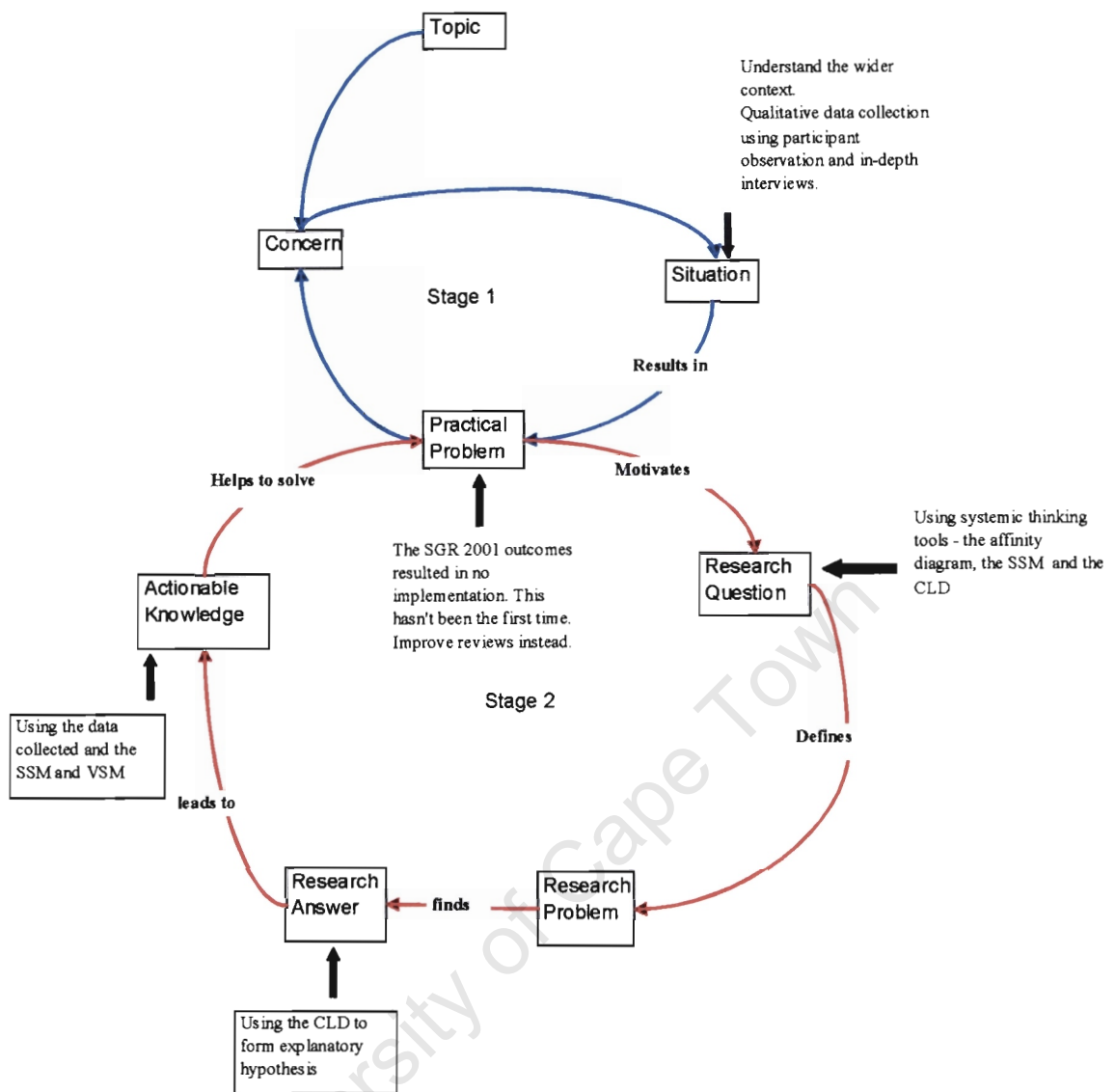


Figure 9: My Research Framework (adapted from course notes)

3.1 Qualitative Research

Research consists of two scientific methods – Quantitative research and qualitative research. Quantitative research is objective inquiry based on measurable variables and is primarily concerned with prediction, explanation and proof of observable events (Guba, 1985; Maykut *et al*, 1994; Neuman, 1999) for example the natural environment. It uses objective data collection, numbers, statistical or mathematical analysis to prove and verify theories and hypothesis. Qualitative research is necessary for human activity systems where situations are complex. It is based on the notion that our personalities and mental constructs influence the way we see the world, and that understanding that world therefore requires an explanation of our constructs (Bernard, 2000; Guba, 1985; Kelly, 1955; Maykut *et al*, 1994). These constructs then guide our actions and vice versa (Guba). The world thus evolves through the interactions of constructs and the actions succeeding them. Thus we cannot rely on quantitative research alone to answer all our questions.

Qualitative research is concerned with understanding a situation by examining participants experience in context (Bernard, 2000; Neuman, 1999; Wickham *et al*, 1997). This can be achieved by means of interviews and observations. Qualitative data sources include observation and “participant observation (fieldwork), interviews and questionnaires, documents and texts, and the researcher’s impressions and reactions” (Myers, 1997). In qualitative research, data is captured in the form of words, texts, body language and images. It focuses on the soft, intangible, immaterial aspects of a situation and is most applicable in contexts where the researcher attempts to capture aspects of the social world, which cannot be represented by numbers alone (Maykut *et al*, 1994; Neuman, 1999). These immaterial aspects also form the backbone of organisations and their explorations are necessary for organisational effectiveness and progression (Argyris, 1992).

Qualitative research is largely open-ended to allow for important meanings to be unearthed. In this way, a broad focus of inquiry is refined as research is conducted. It is also emergent: that is design evolves over time brought about by the process of continuous probing, asking questions and observing new situations (Maykut *et al*, 1994). Qualitative research takes a phenomenological approach meaning that life is socially constructed and therefore subjective, and is experienced differently by different people due to their different backgrounds (Maykut *et al*, 1994). It therefore tries to understand a phenomenon by examining participants experience within the context.

This dissertation explores alternate ways the SRC can improve student governance within a co-operative governance framework and the reasons for little or no implementation of SGR outcomes. The situation is

complex, emergent and humanistic and the most adequate research for this is qualitative. The context involved issues that could not be measured and it consisted of Student Governance Review (SGR), 2001, members, student and university leaders with different perspectives of the problem. It was therefore necessary to understand their mental models about the situation and that meant using “soft” data. Qualitative research deals with uncontrollable/soft variables such as attitudes, body language and words which might be seen by quantitative research as constraints (Bernard, 2000; Neuman, 1999; Maykut *et al*, 1994). Multiple perspectives were therefore required and it was necessary to find out what people said and did concerning the situation. To obtain a sound representation of the events experienced by the participants, I needed to engage in continuous conversation with the participants and used the action learning cycles to explore and clarify what the precise issues were. This gave me a clear picture of the problem.

Qualitative and quantitative data can be used collectively. Quantitative data relies heavily on numerical data to derive meaning (Wickham *et al*, 1997). Although it is important, it is limited in its ability to understand process, feedback and beliefs specific to individuals or the organisation (Bernard, 2000; Maykut, 1994). It can, however, be used to investigate topics of in-depth, qualitative research (Neuman, 1999).

Qualitative research is also inductive and research instruments are devised during the process. Analysis begins following the collection of certain data. With quantitative research, research instruments are devised before they are applied to the subject (Bernard, 2000).

Qualitative research is exploratory. Life is therefore interpretative and is a process of discovery (Bernard, 2000). The research is not devoid of the values of the researcher. To prevent this from confusing the research totally, the researcher should take as many viewpoints as necessary and should remove herself/himself from the situation and reflect on the meanings of the experience. Some qualitative data collection techniques that can be used to extract viewpoints are participant observations and in-depth interviews

3.2 The Action Learning Framework within Qualitative Research

The research method I used for this research was thoroughly examined. It was important to use the correct method to ensure the credibility of my research. In quantitative and scientific studies, action learning is quite unsuitable. It is more appropriate for issues that cannot be easily measured and where change and action is required. Since human activity situations are comprised of uncontrollable variables such as people, attitude and body language and this research project aims to change the situation of the SRC, I chose qualitative research within the action learning framework.

Action learning also provides knowledge required to create the real world conditions that will enable actions to achieve intended outcomes (Neuman, 1999). Actionability is about utility and how to create relevance (Dick, 1993). Action learning is also suitable for graduate thesis work (Zuber-Skerrit *et al*, 1996). According to Zuber-Skerrit, a researcher should work independently in planning, revising and drafting the thesis. It shows explicitly his/her reasoning, and the thinking behind the choices s/he took to change a problem situation. Thesis action learning is illustrated in Figure 11.

Action learning is based on pragmatism, a philosophy which focuses on the application and utility of knowledge.

3.2.1 Action Learning

Action learning aims to improve a problem situation by bringing together all participants who have information on the issues (Raelin, 1997); however, it intends, to a greater extent, to increase the researcher's understanding through his/her work on a real-time problem (Peters *et al*, 1998) and contribute to his/her knowledge (Zuber-Skerrit *et al*, 1996). Action learning can be applied to two types of research (Zuber-Skerrit *et al*, 1996):

The first is within the researcher's own work setting, where s/he interacts with people in the workplace and where the relationship between them is co-operative rather than collaborative. The researcher then moves through the process of formulating his/her theories based on the information collated, and designs solutions to improve the situation.

The second is the individual researcher's learning, which s/he works on independently, outside the workplace. S/he has a general impression of the processes that were used in the research and documents these for the purpose of contributing to knowledge. This can be characterised as reflection.

Characteristics of action learning (adapted from Zuber-Skerrit *et al*, 1996 and Raelin, 1997) are:

- **Practical:** Seeking practical solutions in order to enhance the researcher's understanding of the situation.
- **Co-operative:** This concerns the relationship between the researcher and the participants. The researcher takes a more encouraging and participative role. The participants are not fully involved in jointly creating interventions, but they co-operate with the researcher in his/her project.
- **Participatory:** Participation brings together those concerned with the issue, those who have information on the issue and those who have power to effect change on the issue. The researcher also participates in processes that give him/her information about the problem situation.
- **Focuses on individual learning:** The researcher learns from and documents her individual experience. It is thus reflective and assists in the development of the researcher.
- **Contributes to knowledge:** Through the researcher's thesis work.

Action learning moves through a cyclical process in order to achieve the required change. This allows the researcher to obtain clarity with regard to the system and to challenge information and interpretations from previous cycles by asking and modifying questions (Dick, 1993). The cyclical procedure is necessary because action learning is qualitative, meaning that the researcher works with multiple information sources, by taking different views to increase the accuracy and validity of data (Neuman, 1999). The earlier cycles are repeated in later cycles to increase understanding and refine the problem (see Figure 11).

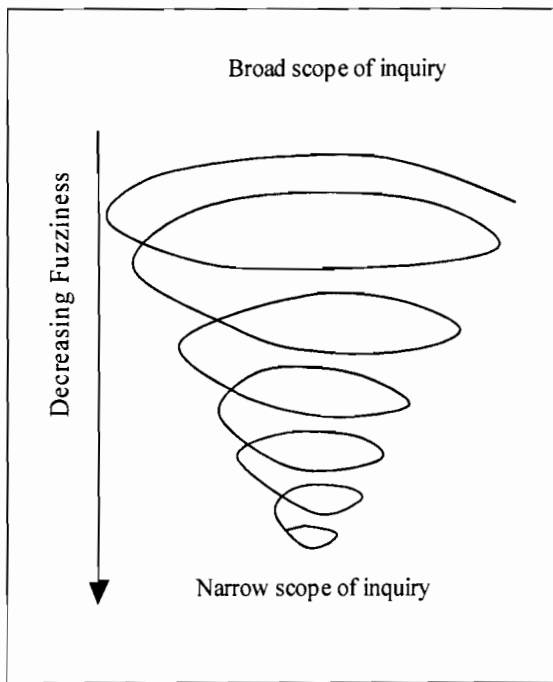


Figure 10: The spiral of increasing clarity with successive inquiry iteration, Dick, 1993.

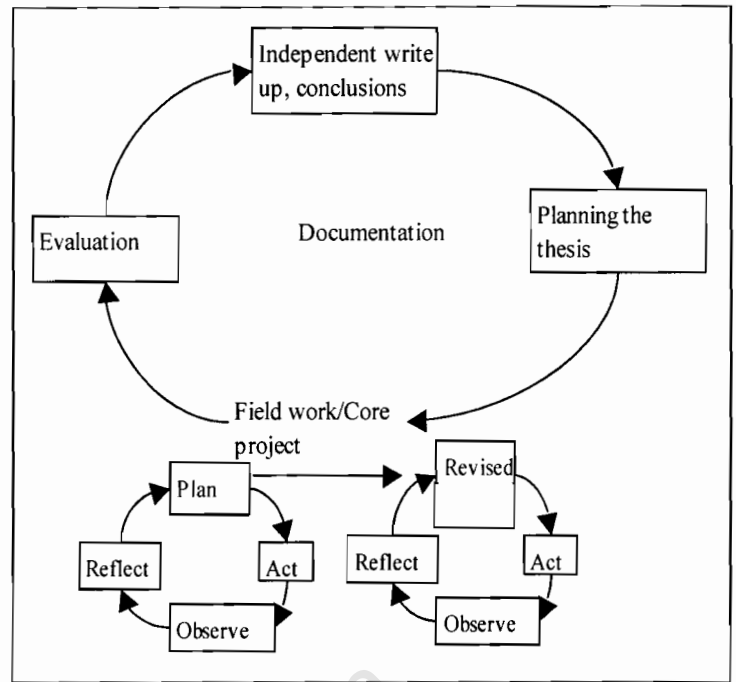


Figure 11: Thesis action learning, adapted from Zuber-Skerrit, 1996

Action learning, in other words, extends learning beyond the life cycle of the project, because it is self-reflective and aims to transform the researcher's thinking. It thus provides a general methodology.

3.3 Systems Thinking

Systems thinking was the paradigm I used within the pragmatic approach. A paradigm is a set of beliefs and values that influence our actions (Ryan, 2000). Since we are dealing with a social context, it is important that a relevant paradigm be used to understand better all the variables at play within the problem situation. Systems thinking was used to aid this. It enables a researcher to focus on the bigger picture and to target the root cause of complex, recurring problems.

Systems thinking is based on different disciplines: the natural sciences, communications and control engineering (Clemson, 1984). The explicit founders of this way of thinking, for example Ross Ashby (1956), Stafford Beer (1969) and Russell Ackoff (1997), perceived thinking about systems as a way of understanding complex situations and bringing about effective change. This approach applies the metaphor of replication to the real world and is based on the assumption that life is produced through the interaction of its sub-elements, which are replicated and composed of different layers of recursion (Ackoff, 1994; Clemson, 1984). Properties of organisms or any phenomena are, therefore, emergent at a

particular level and cannot be explained at lower levels of the phenomenon studied. Systems thinking thus focuses on wholes (Checkland, 1981).

The failure of conventional science to understand the characteristics of wholes, complexity and emergence, especially in the information age, has reinforced the study and use of systems thinking (Ackoff, 1997). Both systems thinking and conventional science are sciences that inquire and aim to understand any phenomenon. However, conventional science seeks to explain everything that occurs in nature. It acknowledges wholes but is reductionist. In other words, it aims to understand anything by reducing it to its material constituents (Ackoff, 1997). This method poses problems when applied in the social world, as it makes understanding contexts complicated and pedantic.

A comparison of systems thinking with conventional approaches, adapted from Guba (1985), is seen in Table 3. These differences are based on their philosophical underpinning, in other words the metaphysics and epistemology underlying them, as well as their means of inquiry and the contexts in which they are most applicable. Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with what reality is.

Philosophy	Conventional science	Systems
Metaphysics	One objective truth/reality operating under universal laws, i.e. cause and effect	Multiple socially-constructed realities. Sharing of these multiple constructions constitutes a reality depending on the most informed and sophisticated one. Emphasis on circular causalities and emergent properties.
Epistemology	Knowledge is universal. Observer is external to the phenomenon studied with detachment of the values and beliefs of the observer. Reality known through the detachment of the observer from the phenomenon studied.	Knowledge is partial. A relationship exists between the observer and the observed. Relationship depends on the characteristics of the person measuring. Reality is known through sharing of multiple constructions.
Means of understanding	Analysis.	Analysis and synthesis.
Context	Natural environment.	Social and man-made environment.
Methodology	Applicable in the natural environment.	Applicable in social contexts. Goes through the process of iteration.
Type of data	Quantitative.	Qualitative and quantitative.

Table 3: Comparison of the paradigms of conventional science and systems thinking (from Guba, 1985).

In conventional thinking, everything in nature is explained through cause and effect relationships, an approach otherwise known as linear thinking. The world operates without the influence of environmental factors and is understood through analysis, which breaks down a problem into parts and understands each part (Ackoff, 1997). It also maintains that values can be suspended in order to understand an entity. Conventional science seeks generalisations and contributes to knowledge by forming a hypothesis and using it to test data (Guba, 1985).

With systems thinking, values are part of research and cannot be dissociated from the individual (Guba, 1985; Maykut *et al*, 1994). The world is also seen as complex and interconnected. Systems thinking sees knowledge as tentative. This means we cannot explain everything, because our knowledge is partial due to our finite mind. Knowledge is therefore gained through exploration in a problem situation (Clemson, 1984; Maykut *et al*, 1994).

Assumptions underlying systems thinking are, according to Ackoff (1997):

- That organisms, phenomena or entities are influenced by the interaction of their subsystems and metasystem – the environment.
- That the world can be understood through synthesis and analysis. Synthesis seeks to identify the underlying factors of a phenomenon by examining the subsystems and the larger system of which they are part. It aims to outline the purpose of the system in relation to the larger system - its environment - and seeks to understand why it works the way it does. Analysis looks at how the subsystems function to form the phenomenon.
- That everything cannot be explained because our knowledge is partial and incomplete. This knowledge is acquired through the relationship of the observer to his/her reality.

Systems thinkers regard social systems or man-made creations as complex, dynamic and unpredictable (Clemson, 1984). In other words, the behaviour of social systems is constantly changing, and these systems are emergent – we do not have full knowledge of all a social system's elements. One way of understanding it is to understand its overall interactions. Systems thinking thus focuses on interactions (Ackoff, 1997). It enables us to be objective and to see the relationships between elements in a social system, thus facilitating better understanding of the problem context.

Reality, according to systems thinking, is subjective and depends on the observer's personality which is shaped by his/her background (Clemson, 1984). Each one of us, therefore, has a different perspective of what his/her reality is and acts accordingly. It uses empiricism as an instrument of knowledge to

understand any phenomena. This enables observations, interpretations and conclusions to be made. The observer is immersed in her/his environment and, in doing so, a relationship is established between the observer and the environment (Checkland, 1981). Because reality depends on the observer, experiencing similar realities happens by sharing knowledge (Checkland, 1981; Clemson, 1984; Guba, 1985).

3.3.1 Definition of a system

From the theory about systems thinking, the question should now be: What is a system? Technically, a system is defined as a whole that consists of one or more parts. These parts have properties, which are separate from the properties of the whole, and their interactions bring about the emergent properties of the whole (Ackoff, 1997).

Stafford Beer, according to Clemson (1984), sums up the characteristics of sustainable systems as follows:

1. Complex - there is more information about a system than the observer can cope with.
2. Dynamic - the behaviour of the system constantly changes due to emergent outcomes created by interactions.
3. Probabilistic - events are not predictable.
4. Integral - situations, events, systems are all linked to a greater purpose so that the outcome might be realised.
5. Open - the systems are immersed in an environment which affects them and is affected by them.

Thinking about systems simplifies complex situations that are beyond the information-processing capabilities of humans (Clemson, 1984). Systems are in reality models we create to understand the world, and are effective when used as a form of inquiry.

3.3.2 Systems Thinking as a form of inquiry

Systems thinking, used as a form of inquiry, tries to identify and understand the phenomenon that is causing most of a system's unpredictable behaviour by understanding its subsystems and environmental factors. This reinforces the statement made by Albert Einstein that "A problem cannot be solved by the same level of consciousness that created it" (Jayananda et al, 2000, p.3; Kim, 1992). Problems therefore need a higher level of thinking so that the system can be understood and revealed.

Before using systems thinking as a form of inquiry, it is necessary to determine whether systems thinking will be of any material assistance. Questions to aid this (from Senge, 1994) are:

- Is the problem chronic?
- Does the problem have a history?
- Have attempts to solve the problem failed?
- Do people have multiple and contrasting theories about the cause of the problem?
- Is the problem important to you or your organisation and worth spending effort in solving?
- Is the problem best addressed with a fresh approach?

Once these have been answered, systems reasoning is then applied by first obtaining multiple realities of the situation. A problem is defined with the help of systemic tools such as the affinity diagram, the ID and the CLD. The CLD is actually a mental model of the actual and ideal situation and shows where interventions can be made to break vicious cycles (Goodman *et al*, 1993; Karash *et al*, 1997; Sweeney *et al*, 1996).

Systems thinking also assists in problem-solving and intervention by asking the following questions (Ryan, 2000):

- What is the system that causes the behaviour? This is otherwise known as the description of the system.
- How does the system perform its function? This is the analysis of the system.
- Why is the system behaving in this way? This is the synthesis of the system.

Systemic thinking aids the description, analysis and synthesis of a problem situation and helps define the boundary of a problem system. It supports immersion into the field as a means of acquiring knowledge.

In a real world context, people in management environments face problem situations on a daily basis. Not being able to deal with them adequately will result in their fire-fighting continuously or implementing solutions that may have undesirable side-effects. Managers need to solve the right problem correctly. Systems thinking allows this by enabling us to examine the underlying structures, to be critical as possible, by questioning theories and mental models, and to test and evaluate them. In this way, we widen our horizons to think strategically and search for areas where intervention will bring long-lasting change. We need, therefore, to examine our mental models in order to deepen our understanding of a system and its environment.

3.4 Soft Systems Methodology (SSM)

The SSM is a systems thinking methodology that aims to improve a situation and understanding on the part of the researcher (Dick, 1993). The nature of the problem in this research is complex and emergent. It is based in a social context and the context is complex pluralistic which means participants have different perspectives of the problem. The SSM is ideal for complex pluralistic contexts because it seeks validity by working with multiple sources of information and with the involvement of stakeholders (Checkland, 1981) to reduce ambiguities in social contexts. It lends itself to the action learning cycle because it also seeks change and enables solutions to be relevant and desirable by allowing for feedback and debate with the stakeholders involved (Dick, 1993). It is rigorous because of its highly conceptual nature, which allows the researcher to consider thoroughly the design of interventions relevant for the problem situation. To solve problems in social contexts, it is necessary that a rigorous methodology be used to unearth the problem and provide the right solutions, taking into account the ambiguities and vagueness of issues present in social contexts (Bernard, 2000; Neuman, 1999). It is thus systemic, qualitative and relevant for social settings. Thus it was a suitable and practical methodology for my research.

The SSM is an approach to problem-solving which requires systemic thought by asking questions such as: What is the system? How does it perform? It is thus a non-numerical systems approach to diagnosis and intervention used in qualitative settings (Naughton, 1990). It is also an inquiry process consisting of four dialectics (Dick, 1993).

The first involves understanding the problem situation by immersing the researcher in the situation and defining the essence of the system. This entails identifying all the stakeholders involved to obtain as many perspectives as are needed to answer the questions: What is the system doing? What is it trying to achieve? How does it operate? Why does it exist?

The essence comprises the most important functions of the system. The researcher operates in the conceptual world when identifying the essence. This identification is aided by the "CATWOE" analysis. This mnemonic, adopted by Checkland (1981) stands for Customers, Actors, Transformation, *Weltanschauung* (Worldview), Owners and Environmental constraints. An iterative process exists between defining the essence and interacting with the stakeholders until the researcher is satisfied with a description of the system's most important functions.

The second dialectic devises ideal systems to bring about feasible change based on the essence. The ideal system is made up of conceptual models that capture ways of transforming the inputs to the required outputs. The third dialectic compares the ideal with the actual, either to bring improvements to the ideal or to improve the problem situation. The fourth dialectic includes discussion and feedback on the proposed changes with the relevant stakeholders.

The iterations within these dialectics are essential in developing a better understanding, on account of the uncertainty and ambiguity of qualitative research settings.

The SSM is thus best used where the values and beliefs of participants differ but where negotiation and compromise is possible (Flood *et al*, 1991). It emphasises a plurality of viewpoints as part of the decision-making and intervention process. It favours the idea that all perceptions are valid and improvements to complex problems are brought about through the sharing of perceptions and through debate (Naughton, 1990). The dialectics are explored in a seven-stage process of inquiry consisting of the following steps (Checkland, 1981):

(1) Problem unstructured- this is the gathering of information from all relevant stakeholders.

The researcher studies the situation as openly as possible, without making any judgements, jumping to conclusions or defining the problem.

(2) Rich pictures - This is a cartoon-like representation that summarises the situation. This picture is "rich" because it contains factual data on the situation; for example, individual departments, reporting channels and graphic representations of attitudes, hostilities, friendships and information.

(3) Relevant systems and their root definitions - These are systems which are relevant to bringing about deeper understanding and improving the situation. The root definition is a description of the essences of the processes required to make the relevant systems work. The CATWOE is used to help obtain the essence of the relevant system. To reiterate, the mnemonic means:

C - customers (those at the receiving end of the system)

A - actors (those who carry out the activities of the system)

T - transformation (the conversion of inputs to outputs)

W - *Weltanschauung* (worldview, beliefs and values of different people)

O - owners (those who have the power to terminate the system)

E - environmental constraints

(4) Conceptual models - This is a graphic representation of the activities, describing what the system should do in order to match the system described in the root definition. The activities

that need to be carried out in the root definition are logically drawn out.

(4a) Formal Systems model – this is used to test the conceptual model to ensure that all the components are in place. It is applied to the development of the conceptual model. Under the Formal System model, a conceptual model is checked under the following criteria

(<http://sern.ucalgary.ca/courses/seng/613/F97/grp4/ssmfinal.html>):

- It “must have some mission”.
- It “must have a measure of performance”.
- It “must have a decision making process”.
- It “must have components which interact with each other such that the effects and actions are transmitted through the system”.
- It “must be part of a wider system with which it interacts”.
- It “must be bounded from the wider system, based on the area where its decision making process has power to enforce an action”.
- It “must have resources at the disposal of its decision making process”.
- It “must either have long term stability, or the ability to recover in event of a disturbance”.
- Its components must be systems having all its properties (subsystems).

(5) Comparison of conceptual models with rich picture – This seeks to highlight differences and changes that would have to be made for reality to reflect the systems thinking contained in the models.

(6) Defining changes - This includes forming solutions that are both culturally feasible and systematically desirable. Culturally feasible means that the change suggested must be possible for the actors involved and practically achievable. Systematically desirable means that the change to be implemented must not contradict the systems thinking that has been applied to the formulation and construction of the root definition and conceptual models.

(7) Action to improve - This involves any actions taken to improve the situation. Discussions are held with the relevant stakeholders.

The seven-stage process as illustrated in Figure 12.

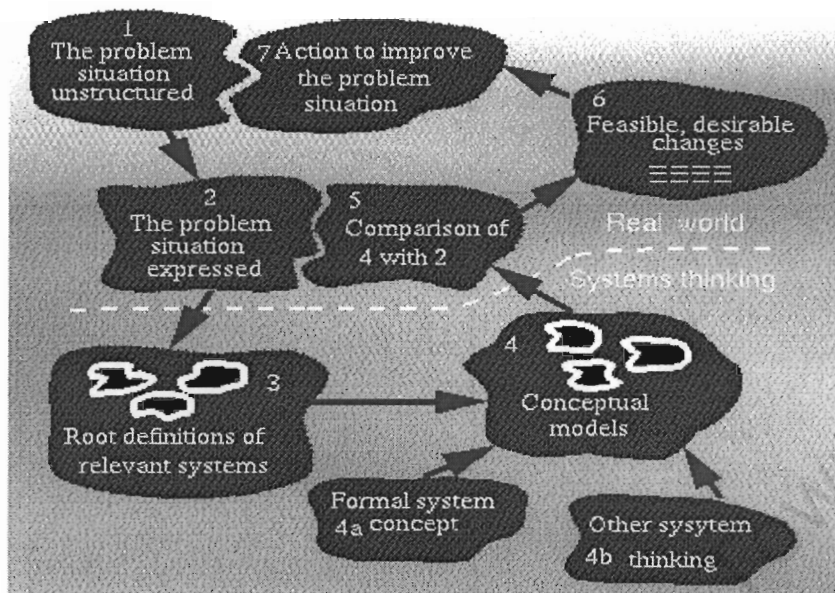


Figure 12: The Seven stage process of Soft Systems Methodology

Adapted from Source: [Online] http://web.sfc.jp/~masanao/Mosaic_data/ssm.html. Accessed 25th October 2002

The cyclical nature of soft systems and action learning is essential in bridging the gap between theories and practice to increase the relevance of the theories and improve practice. The SSM is a systems thinking methodology that allows a researcher to look holistically at a problem by allowing for multiple perspectives of a situation to be taken. Both the SSM and action learning are relevant in social settings, both allow for critical thinking by questioning theories and evaluating them, and they also acknowledge the role a researcher plays in improving the situation.

3.5. Improving the effectiveness of student governance reviews using the Viable System Model (VSM)

The Viable Systems Model (VSM), developed by Stafford Beer, is derived from the general framework and principles of cybernetics (Clemson, 1984). It is a model that diagnoses structural deficiencies and aims to improve structure, which improves the communication and effectiveness of an organisation (Beer, 1969; Espejo *et al* Eds., 1989; Flood *et al* 1991). The VSM was also applied to this research because it aims to provide the SRC with a template that it can use to improve student governance in the future. It provides the requirements and the tools to assist a team to produce change.

Common themes that arose from the data were the lack of communication between the project leaders, the unavailability of the co-ordinator and the limited capacity of the team. The VSM was best used to diagnose the SGR 2001 team because there were issues with requisite capacity, operational issues like facilitators not being present, and certain functions not fulfilled properly. The VSM is a model which not only diagnoses organisational structure but also looks at feedback and communication, looks at the functions and functional capacity and finds out if they are performing according to a set of measures.

Application of the VSM to the SGR will therefore serve as a model the SRC can use for future improvement efforts, ensuring that the team is effective with adequate communication lines so that outcomes can be accepted and implemented.

The VSM is used by managers to understand an organisation, its external environment and the functions within the organisation that combine to ensure the organisation achieves the agreed-upon goals.

A system is viable if it has the ability to improve, based on its previous experiences, and to adapt in a complex and changing environment (Shwaninger *et al*, 1989). It should have the ability to respond to every-day disruptions as well as to sudden and unexpected demands from the environment (Clemson, 1984). In the organisational context, this can be achieved by increasing the competency of people within the organisation and ignoring irrelevant environmental information (Espejo *et al*, 1989).

Application of the VSM requires that the system - its identity and purpose - be examined (Flood *et al*, 1991). The system should also be regarded in terms of its environment as well as to the different functional activities that make up the system. Discovering the identity and purpose is aided by obtaining the viewpoints of the participants.

According to Beer (1969), in order for systems to be able to adapt and to be effective, they should possess co-ordination, control, intelligence and policy functions to add value continuously to their environment. Espejo *et al* (1989) identifies the systems as five functional units (see Figure 13), as follows:

System one (S1)

This comprises the basic operational elements and primary activities of the system. This system is concerned with implementation and interacts with the environment. It is controlled by the meta-system, which includes systems two to five.

System two (S2)

This is the co-ordinating function. It resolves conflict between the various primary activities (system one) and maintains a harmonious relationship between them. It is made up of information channels necessary for autonomy and problem-solving in system one. An effective co-ordination function is the link between systems one and three (the control function) and this ensures that the necessary communication exists between these two entities, reducing top-down communication. It also provides the means by which informal information is exchanged outside rigid communication channels.

System three (S3)

This is the channel for the order and control of system one. System three deals with the "here and now" and manages existing operations. It is responsible for allocating resources to systems one, and acts as a filter for the organisational performance, capabilities and potentials of system one to system five (policy-making). It is also the unit that transfers policy information to system one and ensures effective implementation. Examples of system three functions are quality control, assurance reports, and performance assessment reports.

System four (S4)

This is oriented towards growth and change. The intelligence unit scans the environment, assesses trends and disseminates this information to the organisation for the purposes of improving products/services to meet the current needs. This information aids the organisation to build the relevant capacity and invests in the appropriate resources to maintain a competitive edge. This system also identifies needs and potential for change and transmits urgent information to the organisation. An example of system four is a research and development unit.

System five (S5)

The policy-making unit is responsible for creating the identity and culture of the organisation. It ensures a balance between the need to change (system four) and the need to control resources (system three) in order to prevent the organisation from aimlessly reacting to external changes. It maintains the vision, identity and purpose of the organisation and represents the essence of the organisation to the external environment.

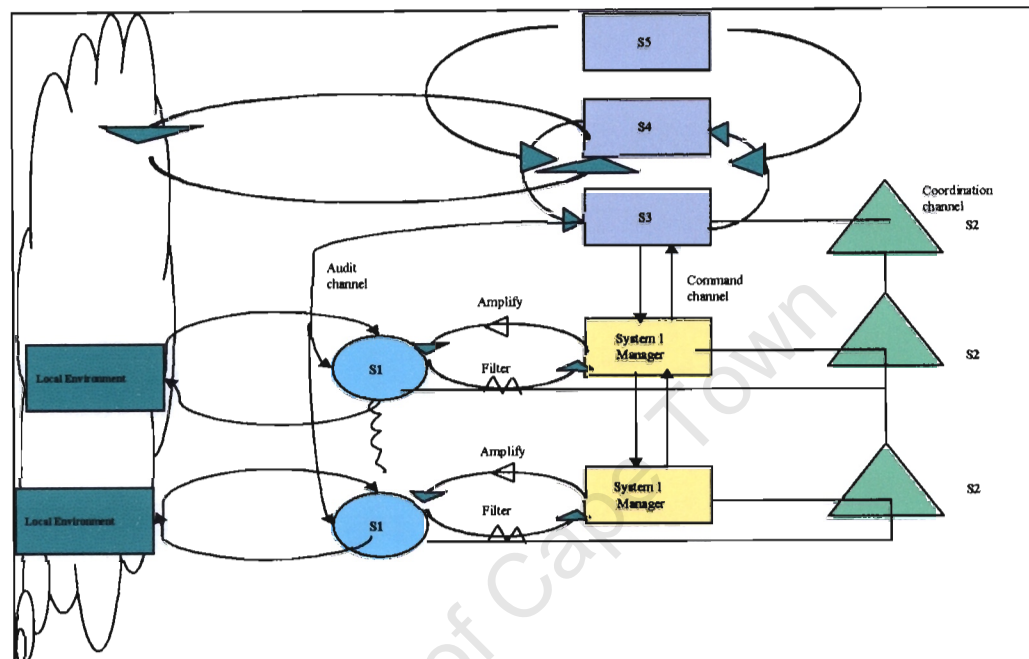


Figure 13: The Viable System Model

Source: Flood and Jackson, 1991

Both the VSM and SSM are complimentary because the VSM is relevant for organisational settings with well-defined goals whereas the SSM can be used for complex social problems where there is a diversity of interests within the organisation. Both provide rigorous and predetermined diagnosis and intervention.

The tools for problem-formulation and problem-solving were qualitative, and applied in a social context using the relevant qualitative data collection techniques.

3.6 Data collection techniques

Data was collected through participant observation, in-depth one-on-one interviews and documents from previous reviews. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) discuss methods of data collection to understand human experience and these include group interviews/focus groups, participant observation and one-on-

one in-depth interviews. Appendices A and B give the questions that were asked, together with the raw data. Nine participants in the SGR team were interviewed. I was unable to organise group interviews because most of the SGR team members could not be available at the same time due to academic demands. The research also coincided with exams and was carried out when the past student leaders were handing over to the new incumbents. The qualitative data techniques based on Maykut and Morehouse (1994) are elaborated below.

3.6.1 Participant Observation

This is a means of understanding the lives of people through observation and participation. Considerable listening skills are required, together with good interpersonal and communication skills. The researcher should be present in the setting but remain "invisible". In other words, s/he should participate in the activities of the subjects without drawing attention to him/herself. A high level of awareness, on the part of the researcher, is necessary to extract data from interactions, body language and signals that may or may not be articulated.

I used this form of data collection throughout the 2001 review as I was a project leader. It was particularly useful in the two conferences that were organised during the review process, where the complexities facing student leadership at different universities were discussed. (See Appendix B for contents of one of these conferences).

3.6.2 In-Depth Interviews

These are conversation-guided and initiated by a researcher interested in gaining in-depth participant perspectives, which are helpful in pursuing a particular inquiry. They require active listening on the part of the researcher. In-depth interviews enable rich conversation because they affect thoughts and feelings. It is therefore advisable to allow one-and-a-half to two hours for an in-depth interview, to establish rapport and an element of trust with the interviewee. Sometimes the interviewee needs to be interviewed more than once for emergent issues to surface and to enable a deeper understanding of perceptions. These interviews demand genuine curiosity about the interviewee's experience, and questions are therefore open-ended to encourage discussion.

I used this form of interview to obtain raw data about the SGR 2001 team's perceptions of the nature of the problem. In-depth interviews made possible the resurfacing of root causes, in addition to confirming and disproving theories. Nine members were interviewed one-on-one in hopes of achieving a rich source of information. However, this was triangulated by participant observation, which occurred throughout the review process and provided a rich source of information.

This chapter has described the framework including the methodology, tools, techniques and research method. The descriptions are important to find the underlying assumptions surrounding their use, if they support a pragmatic approach and can be used in a social context. Their descriptions were also useful to find which paradigm can understand all the variables at play within the problem situation and provide fundamental solutions. Systems thinking is the paradigm that enables this. Qualitative research was used because the problem was in a context that could not be measured. Action learning is the research method used because it requires action on the part of the researcher and is a pragmatic approach. Data collection techniques used were primarily observation and in-depth interviews and secondarily through documents from previous reviews.

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"Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static "snapshots." It is a set of general principles—distilled over the course of the twentieth century, spanning fields as diverse as the physical and social sciences, engineering, and management. ...During the last thirty years, these tools have been applied to understand a wide range of corporate, urban, regional, economic, political, ecological, and even psychological systems. And systems thinking is a sensibility—for the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems their unique character." (Senge, 1990, p.68)

4. Application of the problem-solving tools to the context

This chapter covers the application of the systemic methods, the SSM and the VSM to the problem context to unravel the situational characteristics that will set the foundation for developing a co-ordination/communication system for student governance and provide a template for a team the SRC can work with, to produce desirable results. The SSM targets complex systemic problems and was relevant to overcoming the contrasting views and provide effective long-term feasible and desirable solutions since reviews had a history of lack of implementation.

The VSM is a model of organisation which allows one to diagnose problems. Thus it proposes a model that a review team can use to be effective and efficient in producing results.

4.1 Application of the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM)

The application of each stage of the SSM will be described below.

Stage 1

A number of factors were identified in describing the situation unstructured in chapter 2. These were the perceived irrelevance of the SRC from the students and university management, the fragmented relationship between the SRC, the SP and other student constituents. The problems with the SGR 2001 process included the tardiness of the process, the unavailability of the coordinator and some project leaders, little capacity and guidance of the project teams, limited interaction and communication between the teams. There was limited communication of the process to other student leaders thus causing alienation. The outcomes of the model was not accepted by student leaders because it was perceived as complex and irrelevant to students/leaders needs thus reinforcing the pattern of little implementation of student governance reviews initiated by the SRC.

Stage 2: The rich picture

The rich picture (Figure 7, chapter 2) serves to represent what was known about the situation.

Stages 3 and 4: Relevant systems, their root definitions and conceptual models (the abstract world)

The following relevant systems were found to be the most representative among the many perspectives taken:

- (1) A student governance system
- (2) A change/transformation system
- (3) An SRC sustainability system

The above systems with their root definitions are tabulated below. An illustration of their conceptual models can be seen in Figures 14 to 16.

Relevant system	Root definition	CATWOE
A student governance system.	A system that is effective to students and is representative to students within university governance by creating mechanisms to ensure good coordination and co-operation between student constituents and providing a service for student needs and development.	C = students and staff. A = student leaders, university leaders, students and staff. T = Input – student needs, knowledge, expertise of students, leaders and staff. Transformation – processing and co-ordinating the input to respond effectively Output - satisfied students. W = system exists to enhance quality of life of students. O = students/leaders. E = There is a general apathy to student leadership because of its perceived irrelevance.
A change/transformation system	A system that seeks to improve the effectiveness of student governance by involving the student leaders and the university community to undergo the process of effective change.	C = SGR team, students, leaders, and staff. A = SGR team, students/leaders, university leadership and staff. T = Input – an ineffective system Transformation – applying knowledge and expertise to change an ineffective student governance to an effective student governance. Output - effective student leadership/governance W = The need to adapt and be competent in a flexible and changing environment O = University leadership, students/leaders, SGR team E = tension between rigid institutional, bureaucratic culture and the need for a flexible student governance.

An SRC sustainability system	A system that seeks viability by creating mechanisms to enable it to be relevant to the students and university leadership.	<p>C = SRC members, student leaders, students, university leadership</p> <p>A = SRC members, student leaders, students, university leadership</p> <p>T = Input - students/leaders, skills and expertise Transformation - optimising the input to ensure a relevant and effective SRC Output - an effective SRC</p> <p>W = the SRC is needed to represent students in institutional governance.</p> <p>O = SRC members, students</p> <p>E = unwillingness to change mental models, little capacity of students and university leadership.</p>
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Table 4: The relevant systems, their root definitions and CATWOE analysis of the situation

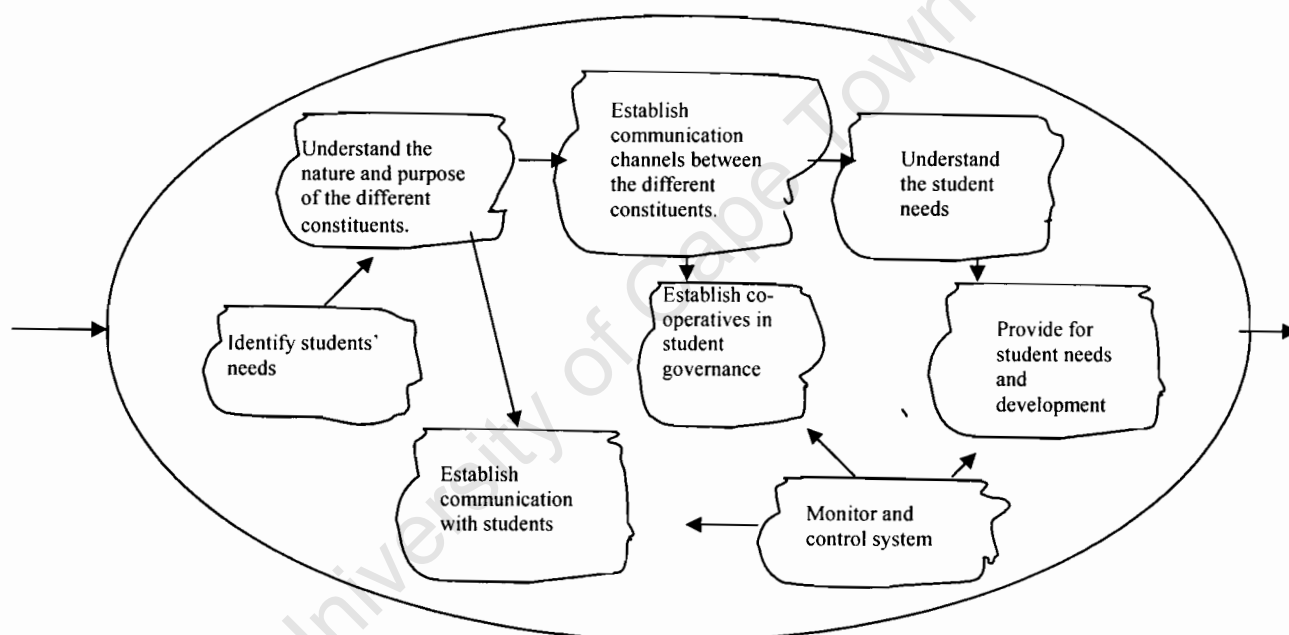


Figure 14: A student governance system

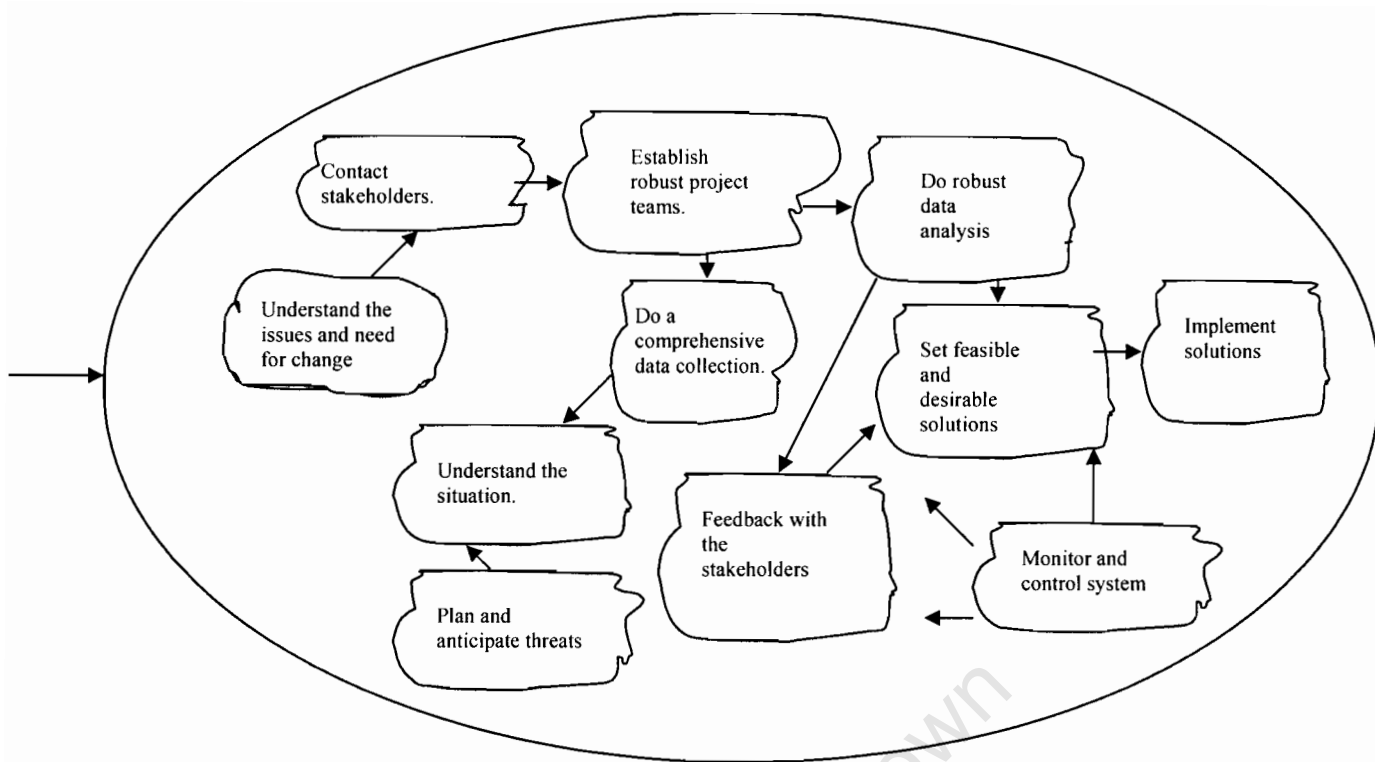


Figure 15: A change/transformation system

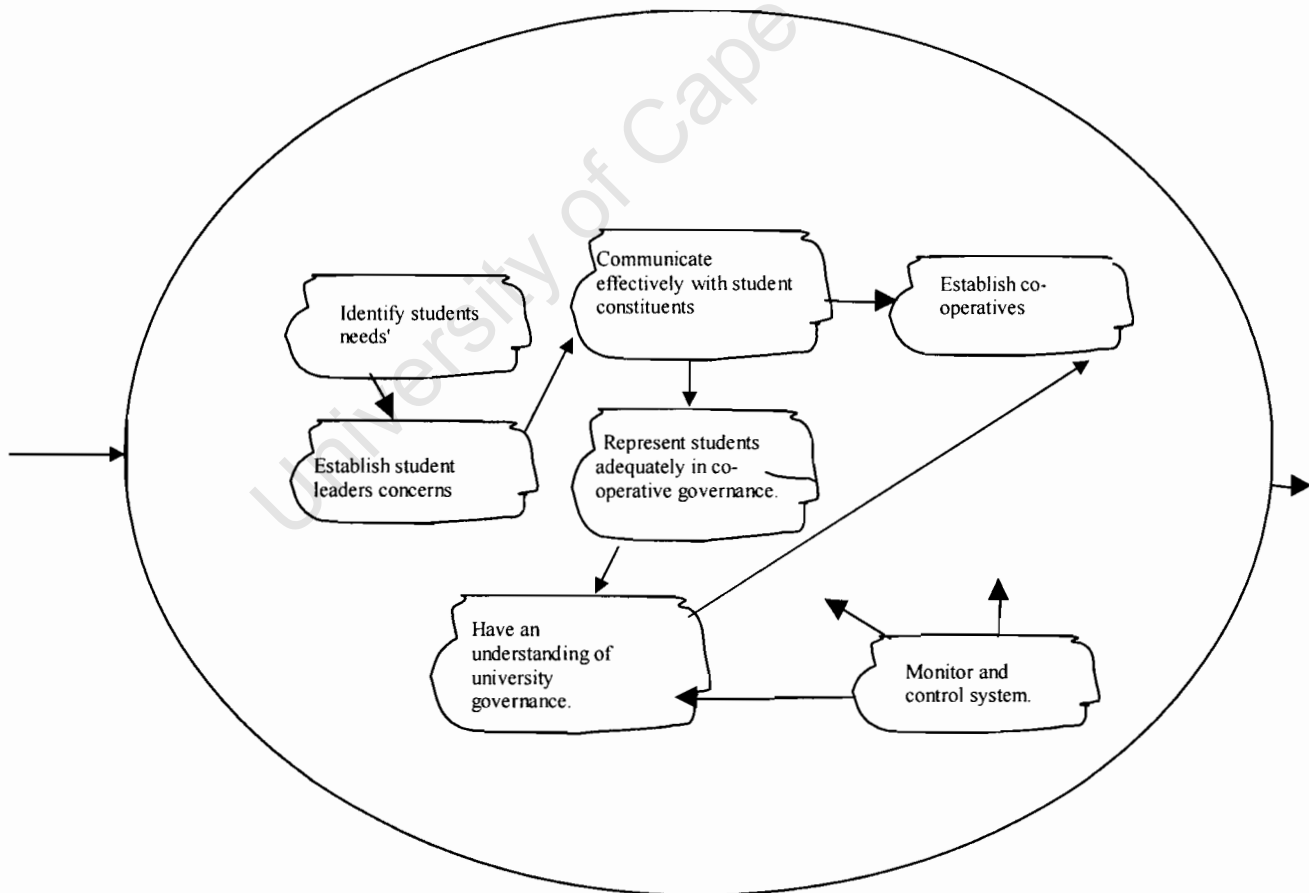


Figure 16: An SRC sustainability system

The conceptual models were tested against the formal systems model (see Chapter 3 Section 3.4) and all the components were in place.

Stage 5: Comparison of the conceptual models with the rich picture

This table shows comparisons of the abstract world with the real world where solutions emerge that are culturally feasible and systemically desirable. This is based on the conceptual models in Figures 14 to 16. The solutions given in the table below are based largely on the data given by the participants interviewed.

A student governance system

Activity in conceptual model	Real World	Comment	Include in Agenda	Systemic Feasibility	Cultural Desirability	Solutions/Comment
Identify students' needs	Not fully	Exist but no control and coordination mechanisms in place.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Improve conversations (soft communication) of student leaders with students and university leadership.
Understand the nature and purpose of the different constituents.	Not fully	Structure lacking.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Each constituent should re-evaluate their purpose. The need to create value to students and the university need to be established. Create policy to clarify purposes and responsibilities of SG
Establish communication channels between the different constituents	No	Structure lacking.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Improve infrastructure through comprehensive purposes and through representatives. Incorporate and empower constituents that deal with the grassroots of students.
Establish communication with students	Yes	Students do not use the means provided to participate in student governance issues.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Mobilise class representatives
Establish co-operatives amongst student constituents and with university leadership	Not fully	Fragmented structure. Students complain of academic demands and lack of time	Yes	Yes	Yes	Establish clear channels for communication. Improve leadership development. Respond to needs. Create policy for co-operatives
Understand the student needs.	Not fully	Insufficient capacity.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Enquire into student needs.
Provide for student needs and development	No					Using the right resources. Mobilise talents and establish co-operatives

						with student leaders and the university.
Monitor and control system	No		Yes	Yes	Yes	Improve communication and leadership development.

Table 5: Comparison of the activities in the student governance system with the real world.

A change/transformation system

Activity in Conceptual model	Real World	Comment	Include in Agenda	Systemic Feasibility	Cultural Desirability	Solutions/Comment
Understand the need and issues for change	Yes		No			.
Contact stakeholders.	Yes		No			
Establish robust project teams.	No	Team lacking in capability, time management and direction.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Through extensive advertising and interviewing.
Identify stakeholders.	Not fully		Yes	Yes	Yes	Through observations, literature review and interviews.
Do a comprehensive data collection.	No	Data collection was not comprehensive enough.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Establish good understanding of qualitative data collection techniques. Manage the interviews.
Do robust data analysis.	No	There wasn't a comprehensive synthesis of all solutions.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Use the relevant tools. Ensure feedback with project teams.
Feedback with the stakeholders	Yes					
Set feasible and desirable solutions	No	Limited feedback with project teams and stakeholders.				Have continuous feedback with the project teams and stakeholders.
Implement solutions	Yes	Lacked capacity and resources				Establish mechanisms for implementation.
Monitor and control system	Not fully	Insufficient communication existed among teams.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Improve communication.
Plan and anticipate threats	Not fully	Not adequately done.	Yes	Yes	Yes	There should be adequate planning concerning research and implementation. Improve SGR projects.

Table 6: Comparison of the activities in the change/transformation system with the real world.

An SRC sustainability system

Activity in conceptual model	Real World	Comment	Include in Agenda	Systemic Feasibility	Cultural Desirability	Solutions/Comment
Identify students' needs.	No	Lack of communication mechanisms	Yes	Yes	Yes	Improve conversations (soft communication) of SRC members with students and university leadership.
Identify student leaders concerns.	No	Fragmentation and lack of time inhibit this.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Establish co-operatives and communication with other constituents. Improve representation.
Communicate effectively with student constituents.	No	Fragmentation and different purposes.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Improve infrastructure. Select the SRC from the SP. Improve representation and establish soft communication.
Represent students adequately in co-operative governance.	No	Insufficient capacity and communication.	No			Improve communication and infrastructure.
Have an understanding of university governance.	No	Inappropriate infrastructure and lack of communication.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Improve communication and structure. Have awareness and capacity building programmes.
Establish co-operatives	No	Fragmentation of student constituents	Yes	Yes	Yes	Improve communication channels, have open-door policy.

Table 7: Comparison of the activities in the SRC sustainability system with the real world.

4.2 Outcomes

The outcomes are based on the solutions generated from the comparisons. However, because they are numerous, the outcomes will be grouped under categories using an affinity diagram. The interrelationship diagram will be used here to find the main driver on which the design will be based.

Operations

Enquire into student needs
 Mobilise class representatives
 Use the right resources, mobilise talents and form co-operatives
 Have awareness and capacity-building programme

Communication/Co-ordination

Incorporate and empower constituents that deal with the grass roots of students
 Establish co-operatives with other constituents

Improve representation
Establish soft communication

Create Policy

Create policy to clarify purposes and responsibilities of SG.
Create policy for co-operatives.

Strategic

Have feedback with the community
Look out for customers, actors and owners
Have extensive advertising and interviews for project leaders
Set comprehensive questions and organise the interviews with the relevant tools and feedback with the project teams.

An interrelationship diagram will now be used to identify the main driver, which in turn will aid design.

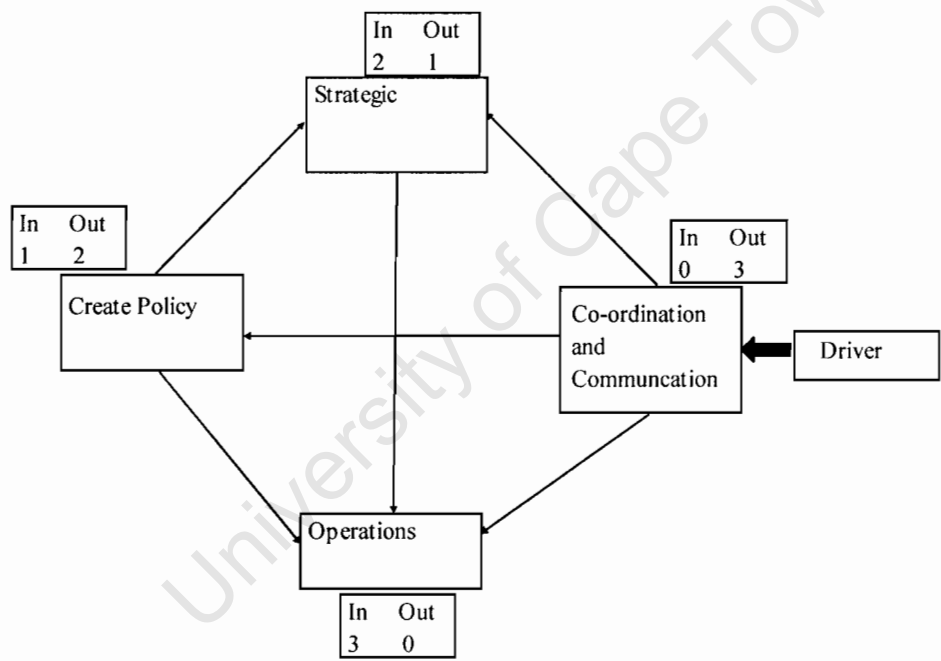


Figure 17: An interrelationship diagram (ID) showing the main driver.

The ID shows that establishing co-ordination and communication in student governance is a key factor that will enable the SRC to improve student governance and be effective in university governance.

The VSM will now be applied to the SGR 2001 review team structure to diagnose any defects and provide solutions that could be used in the future.

4.3 Application of the Viable Systems Model (VSM)

The viability of future review teams depends on a team of agents possessing the ability to produce intended changes. A viable team is robust, has good information flow, and the team members have the necessary tools to produce changes. I chose the VSM as a diagnostic tool for the SGR 2001 team, because there were communication, feedback and capacity issues. The SRC can use this as a template in the future to provide guidelines which the review teams can use to produce change.

The VSM is guided by laws that make an organisation effective by matching its capabilities with those of the outside environment (Clemson, 1984). An organisation is viable when it has the satisfactory communication channels, the required autonomy and the relevant capacity to thrive in its environment.

To summarise, the VSM consists of five functional elements: implementation, co-ordination, control, intelligence and policy.

Implementation (system one) concerns itself with the day-to-day activities. Coordination (system two) co-ordinates all the activities and ensures that there is a good working relationship between them. Control (system three) monitors day-to-day activities, ensuring that they are aiming towards the agreed goals, and reports this to policy. The intelligence function (system four) is responsible for new developments and scanning the environment. The policy function (system five) maintains the identity of the organisation. A detailed description of these elements is provided in Chapter 3, Section 3.5.

The system we will be looking at is the review team, which comprises the five functional elements.

System One

This comprised the different project teams, each investigating specific problem areas and recommending solutions. These areas covered representation, structural interrelationships, capacity and incentives, ownership and participation, finance, and electoral systems. The basic operations included electing and managing the sub-teams, preparing interview questions, analysing the data and providing practical recommendations based on the data. The output made up the reports.

The constraints on system one included limited continuous feedback between the teams and the co-ordinator, limited capacity, lack of commitment from some team members (causing delays due to the time required for the induction of new members), academic demands and insufficient management of the questioning process.

System Two

The co-ordinator and editor fulfilled this function. Activities of system two included co-ordinating the various teams, providing relevant information to those teams and obtaining feedback from them, as well as guiding the progress of the review. Those involved in system two were also responsible for networking with other leaders and making the SGR process known to the University community. Means of communicating the process to the community involved websites, SGR articles, a launch, word-of-mouth communication and meetings.

When the project commenced, communication was on an *ad hoc* basis between the co-ordinator and the project teams through meetings and e-mails. As the process progressed, communication with the project teams became limited. There was a considerable amount of independent work among the teams, with little sharing of ideas. Sources of conflict were the lack of continuous feedback between the co-ordinator and the project teams, limited communication between the project teams and other members of the SGR process, academic demands and the changing of team members.

However, there were elements that had a harmonising effect on the process. These included the recognition that was given to the process, such as the publication of articles and a website and arranging conferences where student leaders were represented nationally.

System Three

Elements of system three included planning the step-by-step process of the review, setting deadlines, providing the relevant resources, monitoring the progress of the SGR – ensuring it was proceeding in accordance with the terms of reference – and collecting progress reports. The co-ordinator and editor also fulfilled this role. Audit requirements and control were carried out through progress reports. Authority was exercised through one-on-one communication. Resources included the use of an office space and a computer.

System three was perceived to be slightly autocratic because project leaders did not assist in designing the final outcomes.

System Four

Activities of system four covered planning and designing the SGR process and gathering information from the environment on the trends and complexities of student governance and leadership. This was successfully carried out by the strategic planners of the review, as they laid out the groundwork.

There was, however, a flaw in this system; namely, that it took into consideration only the potential capacity required and not the actual capacity. In other words, it assumed that capacity was already available to perform the tasks. Moreover, it did not anticipate the response of the UCT student community.

System Five

The board consisted of the steering committee, which included the Dean of Students, the co-ordinator, past and previous members of the SRC and the SP. They made final decisions concerning issues in the project based on the information they received about systems one to four. They also controlled the balance between new ventures and resources. The board met sporadically and their influence on the project teams was minimal.

The SGR team will be modelled according to the VSM as seen in Figure 18.

function, system four, interacts with the outside environment, that is the University community, University leadership and local universities' leadership.

4.4 Diagnosis of the VSM

The VSM will now be used to establish the weaknesses surrounding the five functional elements.

- (1) System two was inadequately represented. There was limited feedback mechanisms between higher management and system one, and little platform for the project leaders to share their progress and ideas.
- (2) Parts of system one lacked proper management and were not operating as viable units, due to the limited capacity of the facilitators. These facilitators were operating in an environment with limited information, induction time and academic demands.
- (3) System three was perceived to be slightly autocratic.
- (4) System four did not consider the capacity or skills needed to carry out the tasks.
- (5) System five did not create an identity for system one because of the minimal influence in the team.

The success of a future review will depend on the improved functioning of these systems. Based on this diagnosis, a more robust structure with the necessary capabilities will be designed (See Chapter 5, Section 5.3) that can be used for future reviews, in order to improve communication and produce the intended change.

This chapter has shown the application of both the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) and the Viable Systems Model (VSM) to the problem situation. The SSM was used to understand the issues surrounding little implementation of SGR outcomes by the SRC and to provide solutions. The VSM, on the other hand, was used to diagnose structural weaknesses specific to the SGR team structure.

Both the SSM and the VSM have proved to be effective in identifying possible solutions relevant for the SRC. The SSM is relevant as it brings all stakeholders perceptions to an area of focus for improvement. The VSM is a valid method in determining the viability of a complex, dynamic and probabilistic team.

“General Systems Theory, a related modern concept [to holism], says that each variable in any system interacts with the other variables so thoroughly that cause and effect cannot be separated. A simple variable can be both cause and effect. Reality will not be still. And it cannot be taken apart! You cannot understand a cell, a rat, a brain structure, a family, a culture if you isolate it from its context. Relationship is everything.” (Ferguson, 1980, p.35)

5. Design for Improvement

Developing actionable knowledge relevant to the everyday world is an essential factor in conducting action learning and integral to my role as learner and designer of a communication/co-ordination system. “Actionable knowledge is the knowledge required to implement the research answer” in the real world (Ryan, 2004, p.10). According to Ryan, 2004, p.11 “theories of management are theories of creating” and design and the objective of management research is about creating. Designs are “specifications of actions taken” to achieve the intended results (Ryan, 2004, p.11). I am proposing that by improving co-ordination and communication in student governance, the SRC will ensure its long term viability in the university community by being proactive as a constituent. The SRC can also improve its viability by working with an effective and efficient team that is able to produce desirable outcomes. The chapter outlines a design of such a vehicle specific for the SRC. Since management research is about transferability, this design can be applied to other student constituents in the university.

The following designs are based largely on solutions recommended by the interviewees, observations (see Appendix B), outcomes of the SSM and VSM and my own views derived from sources such as Espejo *et al* (1989), Flood *et al* (1991), Jablin *et al* (2001), Ryan (2000) and Stacey (2000).

5.1 Co-ordination/Communication

Co-operative governance has been defined as a form of governance that requires an organisation to increase stakeholder participation and decision-making as well as increase partnerships to maintain relevance to society. It thus focuses on how they can all maximise the wealth of society. These partnerships are also heightened through the formal and informal interactions in an organisation. Interactions are heightened by excellent means of communication. Thus this dissertation is based on the premise that improving communication/co-ordination in student governance will enable the SRC to operate better within the framework of co-operative governance. The SRC will also be effective in bringing about change if they obtain support from and establish partnerships with the university management and other student constituents. The University of Cape Town in particular is a university

composed of a large number of people with very few student leaders and university management. It is thus vital that partnerships are formed and the SRC works with other constituent and university management.

In order to strengthen co-ordination in student governance, the following tasks should be completed:

5.1.1 Use class representatives

Class representatives are essential to student governance because they reach a wider population of students and are in direct contact with them. It can be seen from the data (Appendix B) that the general apathy to the SGR 2001 was due to the apparent irrelevance of student governance to students who are more interested in their academics and/or services offered in the University that are related to academia. The class representatives deal specifically with this area of student focus and are a first-hand link to SG.

Coordination in student governance would be strengthened if ongoing discussions concerning issues in student governance take place with the class representatives. They can act as information channels between the SRC and the students as to what students desire from student governance.

They can therefore be responsible for strengthening co-ordination of SG by taking up the following roles and responsibilities:

- They should be a direct link with the Faculty councils and with the SP. Thus information can be easily accessible to the SRC
- Faculty councils should include a high percentage of class representatives to improve co-ordination between them, and to ensure that information on student issues and governance is accessible to enable them to have a faster response to their needs.
- Representatives should have a genuine commitment and passion for the well-being of students.

5.1.2 Changing selection mechanisms

Co-ordination between the student constituents is enhanced through a good working relationship with the Student Parliament (SP) and the SRC. The SP is made up of representatives from different student bodies selected or elected from their various constituents. They are officially responsible for drawing up policy. The SRC is selected through a campus-wide campaign and is officially responsible for implementing policy and managing the process. A harmonious relationship between the SRC and the SP may be created by changing the selection styles and appointing the SRC from the SP. The SRC will now be in direct contact with other student constituents and the SGR project can thus be owned and supported by a greater number of student leaders.

5.1.3 Providing information

Information channels should exist to enable student leaders to be aware of the activities of student governance and importance, process and outcomes of any review. This can be done by word of mouth and by making use of the University's resources, such as radio resources on campus, notice boards and web-based tools, including websites, the internet and intranet. Other resources include the Monday Paper, a student leadership and governance paper and any other promotional articles that could possibly be utilised. A culture of communication between student leaders can be assisted technologically through the following:

- Interactive websites. These should be created and available for student leaders to participate in the change process.
- Emails.
- Minutes of meetings. These should be recorded and available on websites so that the information can be accessible to the student leaders.

5.1.4 Improving representation within student governance

The SP is the body that comprises representatives of all student bodies and which has been inadequately represented (see Appendix B). Representation should be a certain percentage of the number of members in various student constituents to increase transparency and accuracy of information.

The SP is a large body of more than 60 members representing a diversity of interests, and co-ordination and decision-making may prove to be difficult with such a large group. Small creative subgroups can thus be formed to discuss issues in student governance or the process and the outcomes of the SGR specific to the different interests - academics, political, sport, residence sectors and cultural organisations - and ensure meaningful and creative decision-making. These different sub-groups within the SP should:

- Have on-going discussions within their constituent concerning the issues in SG.
- Act as feedback between the student leaders and the SRC to ensure the most relevant and desirable solutions materialises.
- Contribute to joint problem-solving of issues within their constituent and implementation of desirable outcomes.

Each student constituent will have one or two members acting as checks and balances, who will ensure the flow of information between the sub-groups and student constituents.

5.1.5 Clarifying roles and responsibilities

As a result of the change in selection mechanisms and responsibilities, the SRC and the SP should clarify their roles and responsibilities so that there can be understanding between these two bodies. The SRC is currently created through popularity vote based on the promises it aims to deliver. This raises the students' expectations and when it fails to do so, there is further apathy among the students. As the executive of the SP, the SRC's new role will include managing the various tasks set by the SP and representing students in the Council and institutional governance. Co-ordination will be strengthened as the SRC will now be in direct contact with other student constituents to discuss changes in student governance.

5.1.6 "Soft" information channels

Co-ordination also provides a means by which informal information is exchanged outside rigid communication channels. I refer to these as soft information channels. The SRC can strengthen co-ordination by engaging in soft communication with student leaders of other constituents. That way, issues can be discussed easily thus facilitating a better understanding of concerns in student governance so that the right actions can be taken. Soft information channels are the level of interaction and conversation in which the SRC engages, making sense of them. Stacey (2000) stresses that rich conversations are actually a means for an organisation to attain its goals. A change in an organisation therefore means a change in the way we speak and these small differences are amplified to become something creative.

The SRC should adopt the habit of having rich conversations with other student leaders outside the confines of their formal tasks, in order to understand the needs of the different constituents so that the relevant changes may materialise. This is confirmed by Jablin (2001), who suggests that communication or language governs behaviour.

The habit of having rich conversations and taking realistic purposeful action can be aided through an action learning type cycle as seen in Figure 19.

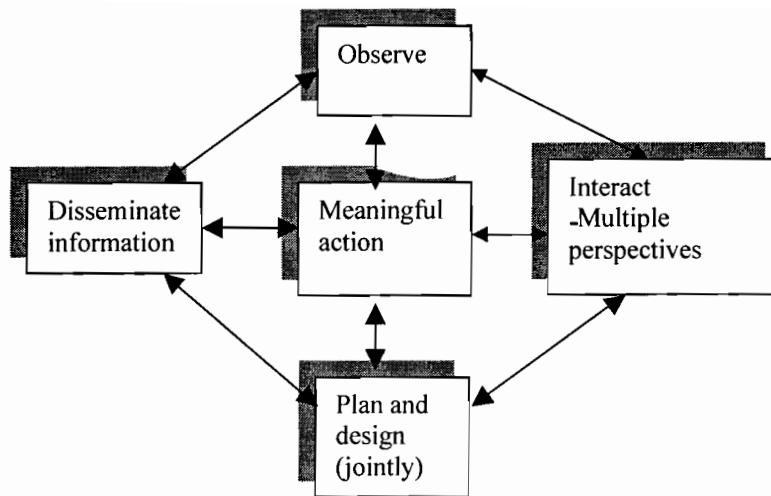


Figure 19: The process of engaging in rich conversations and taking meaningful actions.

5.1.6.1 Observing

The SRC should develop a heightened awareness of their university environment so that they notice signals, trends and activities on campus. Such awareness will require participating in the meetings of the different constituents, debates and talks and observation of notice boards. This activity will help inform them of the correct issues in student governance.

5.1.6.2 Interacting

The SRC should continuously interact and communicate on an informal basis with student leaders from different constituents and with university management. Thus a better understanding of the different constituents can ensue. This can be carried out in social settings. Interactions help uncover assumptions governing student leaders thoughts and enable student leaders to discuss changes and outcomes for student governance.

Interacting enables personal relationships to be formed, thus creating an environment of trust and friendship. Interacting will contribute to establishing co-operatives with university management and enable contacts to be made.

5.1.6.3 Planning and designing

With a better understanding of the operations and the issues of the different constituents, the SRC can truly represent other student constituents in institutional governance. While in this stage, the SRC should be asking itself: *How can I make use of this information? How will it impact me as a student or my student sector? What action will bring about the greatest change to me or my student sector?*

The SRC may need to return to the interaction phase with other student leaders, members of their constituent, or University management to plan jointly and assist in problem-solving. They should create an environment where everyone shares his/her ideas and knowledge, so that they can collectively deal with a problem. Joint planning and designing within student constituents can be enhanced by using systems thinking tools, such as brainstorming and the affinity diagram, which helps elicit creative ideas and show where changes can occur.

5.1.6.4 Dissemination of information

This can be carried out by members of the SP. Changes for student governance can be discussed with the different constituents until suitable solutions can emerge and be implemented. Information can be disseminated primarily through meetings and secondly through one-on-one communication, intranet, internet, and noticeboards. Feedback is necessary so that whatever contradictions arise from plans and strategies will lead back to the cycle of interacting, with the aim of devising strategies that are desirable to everyone.

5.2 Tools to maintain Co-ordination

Maintaining co-ordination will require a certain level of capacity, which can be achieved by utilising the relevant tools. Capacity, meanwhile, has been identified as lacking in student governance (Appendix B). Although these capacity building tools are specific for the SRC, they can be applied to all student leaders in student governance. Capacity building in student leaders, therefore, will be crucial in enabling its members to improve student governance and to maintaining the SRC's effectiveness.

Capacity building should be based on the principles of continuous improvement so that the SRC can be empowered to take action and learn the art of solving their problems. An action learning approach is most useful for this. A persistent problem with the SGR is that student leaders are only in the system for a year, therefore there is no continuity of implementation. An action learning approach ensures that the

SRC has a true representation of the issues of student governance, come up with the relevant solutions and take the right actions to produce positive changes. Tools enabling the SRC to communicate effectively are outlined as follows.

5.2.1 Action Learning approach

The action learning approach stresses that real learning occurs in the workplace, when people are continually looking for ways to improve themselves and their organisation (Peters, 1998). It is a self-improvement method that ensures that workers solve their own problems and create their own solutions in everyday jobs. This can be a tool that the SRC uses to engage in real-time problems relevant to its constituent. Thus they can timely deal with problems rather than waiting for them to escalate. Action learning supports co-ordination in student governance because it supports immersion in the field thereby enabling student leaders to interact with other student leaders on issues they want to improve.

The action learning approach should first be introduced to student leaders through exposure to many sources of information and tools that assist in problem-solving. Student leaders should acquire the habit of reading a diversity of leadership development books. A resource centre should be created for student leaders to equip them in the art of problem-solving providing a wide variety of leadership development books including "soft" problem-solving techniques and/or web-based tools. The student leaders should then identify areas they would like to improve in student governance, repeatedly asking the questions: *What's in it for me and what value would learning these tools bring to me and/or student governance?*

Realistic action plans should be drawn up, including their implications for the student leader and student governance. These action plans can be applied to student governance and learning points can be drawn up as a result of executing the plans. Student leaders can then discuss their learning and the tools to other student leaders. These discussions can be run throughout the year in a workshop format.

The action learning approach will also mean that student leaders are reflective and document their experiences for new student leaders to learn.

5.2.2 Participant Observation

This will require active listening as well as the desire to understand student leaders and their point of view. The SRC should develop a high level of awareness of current campus trends. Participant observation requires that they are present in environments that enable them to increase their knowledge

of issues. Attendance in meetings of the different constituents, talks, conferences and debates will assist them in gaining the knowledge.

5.2.3 In-depth Interviews

This allows for rich conversations because its purpose is to foster understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the student leaders which, De Shave *et al* (1985) argue, are responsible for guiding actions. In-depth interviewing also provides a means by which rich information is exchanged because it encourages student leaders to articulate their thoughts. This enables rich information of student governance to be taken and realistic action plans to be drawn. In-depth interviewing also enables conversation with a diversity of student leaders to form networks and build trust.

5.2.4 Culture

Culture can be regarded in this dissertation as a means to maintain communication by use of documentation and a change of language. A culture of documentation and reflection should exist to ensure continuity in student leadership because of the high turnover of student leaders. Continuity could be enhanced through documentation of the learning experiences and activities of student leaders. A change of language can also be used to break the barriers of bureaucracy and reduce the “us” Vs “them” attitude between student leaders and university management. Language in student leadership should be based on co-operation and understanding.

Other means of ensuring continuity are:

- The presence of a permanent office where ex-student leaders can be involved in inducting new student leaders.

- Leadership training through agreement with past student leaders to pass on their knowledge at the beginning of the term

- Establishing mentorship programs to build up student leaders capacity and monitor their progress

5.2.5 Brainstorming

This is used for generating ideas and solutions. In brainstorming sessions, the facilitator generates ideas from all members of a group without analysis or judgement. This can be a most useful tool for the SRC to map out strategy, clarify plans and assist in problem solving in student governance.

5.2.6 Affinity diagram

For complex problems, this will also assist in problem-solving.

5.2.7 Workshops

Workshops can be an ideal place for the dissemination of these tools to student leaders. Former student leaders pass on their knowledge and experience in these workshops which can then be used as a means to induct new student leaders.

Capacity building should continue throughout the year and may be completed by a student resource and development centre. They will make full use of the University's resources and knowledge from staff and past student leaders equipped in leadership development. Joint team-building exercises should be carried out with student leaders, stressing the importance of teamwork to enhance communication between them. The development centre should provide the requisite resources and information for student leaders to perform their tasks effectively.

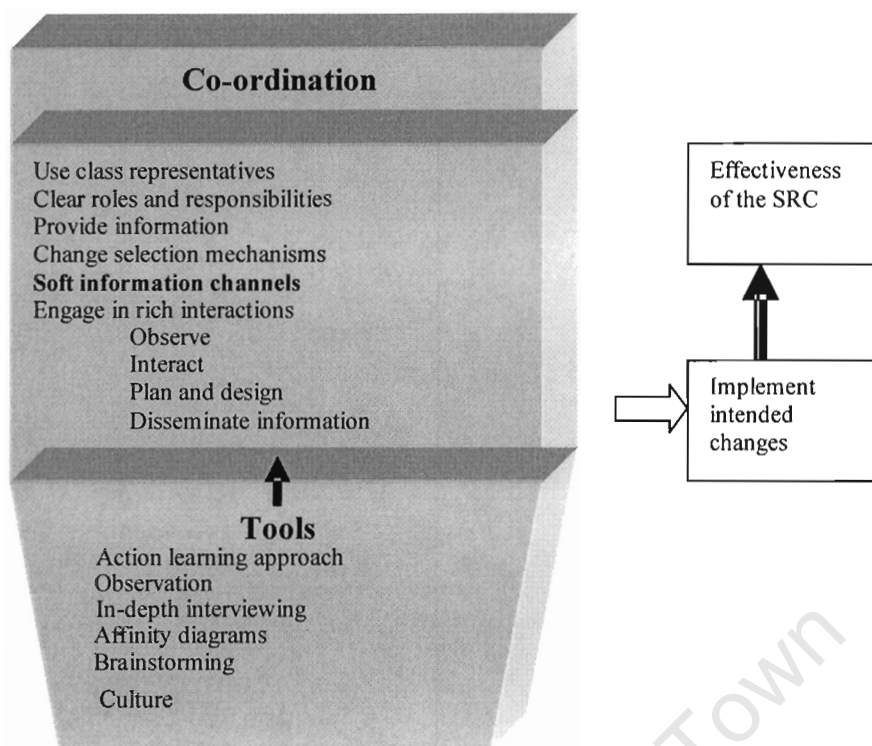


Figure 20: Illustration of the intervention necessary for the effectiveness of the SRC.

The diagram shows that utilising class representatives, changing selection mechanisms and improving representation are fundamental pillars that will lead to improvement in student governance. Capacity-building tools like action learning, participant observation and in-depth interviews will aid in improving informal communication in student governance so that a true representation of issues in student governance ensues.

5.3 Design of an effective SGR team

This section describes the design of an effective and efficient review team structure, following ongoing complaints about operational mishaps and limited communication with the review team and some members of the SRC and SP(see Appendix B). This can be used as a guideline the SRC can use to carry out any SGR.

The success of future reviews will be based on improving or creating the functional elements – co-ordination, control, intelligence and policy - within the team. It will also require commitment and drive from all members of the team. For the SGR to be fully functional, it needs to:

Build the policy function (the board)

The board should comprise some members of the SRC, the project manager/co-ordinator, members who have the greatest influence and whose decisions will determine change, advisors who will include some members of the design team and past student leaders. The board should be responsible for making final decisions concerning all issues regarding the project and should balance the need to maintain resources and new ventures.

The project manager/co-ordinator should liaise with the board fortnightly to update its members with the progress and resources needed.

Build the co-ordinating function

This function will be important in distributing information throughout the team. The team will need the full commitment of the co-ordinator who will assume the role of project manager. S/he will provide a platform from which project leaders may share ideas and discuss issues. This can take place fortnightly, so that the project leaders can get a sense of the bigger picture and assist in synthesising the final outcomes. S/he will also be responsible for initiating and co-ordinating weekly meetings with different project teams with regard to the process, team motivation and the creation of an environment of team spirit.

S/he will also need to liaise fortnightly with the SRC, strategic planners/designers of the SGR and with the board on the progress of the SGR to achieve proper monitoring and to resolve issues. Because communication with the University management was lacking (see Appendix B), s/he will need to liaise fortnightly with the University management to obtain their support and keep the communication lines between them open.

S/he may/will need to work with a team who will provide information to the rest of the University through, for example, articles, word-of-mouth communication and websites.

S/he should also be available to assist with planning, scheduling, controlling and monitoring the project with the help of the project leaders and design team.

Build the monitoring function

This role should be played by the project manager and certain members of the board, to ensure that an overall trade-off is made between the quality of outcomes, time and the resources available. The project manager should always be available to alert the board of urgent changes that need to be made.

Monitoring can be exercised by word of mouth, through emails, meetings and/or through progress reports.

Build the design function

A problem with the SGR 2001 was that most of the designers of that review were not present at the time it was taking place. Their presence is essential and should be available during the process to ensure proper continuity and monitoring of the process and assist in problem-solving.

The project manager/co-ordinator should liaise with the design team by means of fortnightly meetings and by telephone.

The design function should also be responsible for planning ventures that may increase the team's awareness of student leadership by arranging programmes, where necessary, like workshops and talks.

5.4 Capacity and Tools required for an effective review

The effective utilisation of problem-solving tools will contribute towards understanding the nature of the problems and obtaining sufficient information from the stakeholders to increase the validity, credibility and feasibility of the recommendations. Stakeholders should be identified initially by all the members of the project teams and data may be collected by means of observations, group interviews and in-depth interviews. In cases where interviewees cannot be present, questionnaires should be sent by email to increase perspectives and participation.

Tools to aid the project leaders problem-solve include those discussed in section 5.2 such as action learning, brainstorming and affinity diagrams.

The choice of project leaders and the co-ordinator will be based on their knowledge of qualitative problem-solving and the complexities within their constituent or of student leadership. Members may be chosen preferably, but not necessarily, from within the student constituent. The selection will also be based on previous experience/achievements and members' full commitment to the project. Reviews should also have a knowledge-base and resources available to assist the teams to carry out their job effectively. These include:

- (1) The use of websites. Sites should be available for the project teams to increase their knowledge of trends related to student governance.
- (2) Interaction via email. A culture should be created for this, to alert others of sudden changes so that quick action can be taken.
- (3) Minutes of meetings. These should be recorded and provided to all members of the SGR.

A core group of the review team should be involved in the process for a period of two or more years to adequately understand the university and ensure continuity and implementation of the process. Negotiation and communication with the university management and student leaders can guarantee that the solutions resulting from any review are desirable and accepted by people of influence and can be implemented. Thus a fundamental requirement is that the university management needs to be a vital part of the review process. The review process should be driven by people with strong leadership and excellent communication skills in order to break through the bureaucratic nature of the university. Thus a culture of adequate leadership training should be given regularly to the student leaders. The university management should also let their guards down for changes that may take place in student governance. The student development leadership office can be used to provide leadership training using the knowledge and expertise of student leaders.

This chapter has demonstrated alternate ways in which the SRC can improve student governance. One of which is to improve communication/co-ordination of SG. Action learning has been identified as one of the approaches and tools that will enable communication to be established and also improvements to be made in student governance. The other is by working with a team with adequate co-ordination, control, intelligence and policy functions so that outcomes are readily accepted.

"That which is unchallenged and exercised as habit rapidly becomes ritual. When this occurs, dissent becomes an object of surprise, if not resentment." -- B. Carmon Hardy (The Life, Times and Family of Orson Pratt Brown, 2001)

6. Discussion of the design with stakeholders

The recommendations were tested against the experience of significant stakeholders. Since action learning focuses on the individual researcher's learning, learning was a consequence of the testing. The difficulties of implementing my recommendations were related to a number of constraints which were firstly my role in the process. I was not a member of student governance and therefore did not have the power and influence to carry out the implementation. Secondly there was a change in student leadership. The new student leaders did not identify with the same issues as the old student leaders. Thirdly, some stakeholders did not agree with some of the recommendations, they needed political models to understand their system so I encountered a conflict in perspectives – systems thinking versus political models. Action learning is also an emerging process which takes place in a constantly changing environment. The situation is embedded in a dynamic evolving context with constraints and limitations. The outcomes derived may not be suitable for the context at a later stage.

However, I have made a positive contribution to the system. I also have a greater understanding of the context. Although there was not a platform for the SRC members and all members of the 2001 team to reflect on the SGR process, this research enhanced the learning of the different members. The interviews empowered them to reflect on the process and to find ways in which it can be improved in the future. They also had the opportunity to consider their leadership styles and discover areas that needed improvement. The evaluation of the SGR 2001 also encouraged them to think about simplifying aspects of the model to make it relevant to the student community.

The following indicates the response of the SGR team members and some SRC members to various outcomes. Within the SGR team, the responses were split as there were opposing views to some of the issues. These responses were taken from those of student leaders to the SGR model at the October 2001 conference.

Response of participants to the recommendations	SRC members 1999/2000	SRC leader 2000/2001	SGR members	Other SGR members
Use class representatives	Good idea. They need to be part of the system since they interact with the students daily.	Good idea. They are indeed vital and relevant to the SG structure.	Relevant will work.	I support.
Select the SRC from the SP	Will not work. The SRC needs to campaign. The SP already contains different interest groups and there is a low commitment level judging from the meetings.	Same here.	I support. This will improve unity.	No. Better to have a big body like an assembly so that all student constituents can campaign for membership into the assembly.
Have uniform election/selection time for all constituents.	I support. If there's going to be assembly, then selection times should be the same for all constituents	Same	I support. This will improve unity amongst student constituents.	I support
Use the university's resource paper to provide information to the university community about student leadership and governance	I agree.	I agree.	I support.	I support.
Improve coordination by changing representation	No comment	No comment	I agree. This will increase transparency for those with a 600 member committee	I agree.
Provide leadership-development.	Good but who is going to champion this.	They already have leadership development	I Agree.	I Agree.

Table 8: Response to some of the recommendations from the stakeholders

Recommendations, such as using the class representatives, were welcomed by some student leaders. However, choosing the SRC from the SP was met with some hesitation as some student leaders felt that campus-wide campaigns still need to be carried out to maintain legitimacy.

There are several similarities and differences between the outcomes of the SGR and this dissertation. Both acknowledge that class representatives are vital assets in student governance and the relationship between the SP and the SRC needs to be improved. However, the differences were that the SGR focused

entirely on building a structure for student governance. The outcomes of the SGR 2001 were complex, because they did not include the requisite structural capacity, nor did they outline responsibilities or job requirement. This research simplifies everything by viewing structure and providing the tools the SRC and other student leaders can use to make positive changes within their constituents. It therefore recommends ways to improve interaction with the students. By creating a culture of leadership development, the SRC and student leaders will be well equipped to produce intended changes.

As of now, the talk about SGR has come to a halt because of the change in leadership. The student leaders who initiated the process and worked with the SGR team have finished their studies and left. The changing nature of student leadership and the short time span makes it seem impossible to initiate change. It would be necessary to target the relevant parties at the beginning of the year so that discussions for change can proceed.

Some of my recommendations were not well received by certain student leaders because I had not taken into consideration the political climate. SG is also governed by politics and exertion of power. This is, however, beyond the scope of my thesis and also due to the limitations of the problem-solving tools utilised. It should, however, be a case for further research.

This chapter has revealed the perceptions of some of the SGR 2001 members and student leaders to the recommendations. It can be seen that feedback with the stakeholders is necessary for solutions to be desirable to all.

"To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly." HENRI BERGSON (Derendinga, 2003, p.15)

7. Reflection

This project has proved that the tools and methodologies used can be applicable and relevant for management practice. By conducting this action learning, I feel more confident in performing action learning in any organisational or institutional context.

Below are my personal impressions and a description of what I learnt during the whole process.

7.1 Using the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM)

The SSM was useful in designing feasible and relevant solutions. There were, however, disadvantages, one of which emerged in drawing up the conceptual models. I had difficulty visualising the processes that were needed for social issues. The conceptual stage seemed to be mechanistic in the way that I was required to deduce social issues in order to reach a conclusion, and I had to prevent myself from becoming caught up in unnecessary detail. I believe the solutions can still be effected by introducing multiple perspectives and by using the CLD and the affinity diagram. Moreover, the root definitions did not capture every issue in the social system.

I was conducting research in a context that was highly political and democratic. My area and topic of interest - governance - operated in a system that required political astuteness. The SSM is limited in its ability to respond to the political climate or to understand models of power. The solutions may be feasible, but its application fails to eliminate the negative effects. I found this to be true throughout the SGR process, because there were particular power plays aimed at specific outcomes. The solutions proposed may thus be desirable, but their implementation still depends on those with the most power and continues to be influenced by them. The SSM centres on development and improving efficiency and effectiveness.

The SSM seeks to change a situation by changing stakeholder's worldview. It is also limited in its acknowledgement that conflicts are a result of status or division of resources. Extreme cases refer to

fundamental organisations in which ideologies cannot be compromised. Coercive forms of power can sometimes dominate these organisations where the systems methodologies cannot be applied.

7.2 Using the Viable Systems Model (VSM)

I found the VSM extremely useful in this context and it is a powerful tool in designing relevant functions, roles and responsibilities for organisations. It enabled me to be creative in designing a viable structure as well as increasing my awareness of the tools required to build capacity.

During my library research, I found that the VSM satisfied the criteria of good governance. According to Tricker (1984), the word 'governance' is derived originally from the Latin *eubernare* meaning steermanship, thus emphasising the need for control and regulation, and cybernetics bases its definitions on this. Cybernetics is the science of effective organisations in relation to communication, feedback, control and behaviour (Clemson, 1984). It is guided by laws that make an organisation effective by matching its capabilities with those of the outside environment and the VSM is based on these laws. An organisation has good governance when it has satisfactory communication channels, the required autonomy and the relevant capacity to thrive in its environment. In order for good governance to be applied in any environment, therefore, it is necessary to understand and accept the philosophies and principles of the VSM and cybernetics and to have proper co-ordination, control, intelligence and policy units in the area they are governing. These then need to be modified to suit the context.

Improvement in an organisation using the VSM will require implementation by members with considerable influence in the organisation, who are prepared to manage the process until completion and then follow up. If not, change will not be produced.

I realised that both the VSM and SSM are rational problem-solving tools and goal-oriented. They are both used in contexts where compromise is possible or where there are uniform goals. Their aim is to bring about functional and economic improvement, self-development and emancipation. However, they were both limited in their approach to the concept of power. Firm beliefs, held over many years, cannot easily be uprooted by the likes of VSM and the SSM.

7.3 Using Causal Loop Diagrams and archetypes

I recommend the CLD and archetype family in understanding complex problem situations. They are powerful critical thinking tools and proved to be most useful for this dissertation. The archetype made me aware of the type of behaviour the problem context was exhibiting. It also made me aware of how the solutions might add to the problem situation. Attempts to improve the SRC appeared to be curing the symptoms rather than tackling the real problem. The CLD thus enabled me to see the problem from a fresh perspective without rushing into improving the review, and to look at the whole system.

7.4 Action Learning

Action learning improved my learning and understanding of the problem situation, as well as increased my personal development. Application of the tools and methodologies, as well as obtaining feedback from stakeholders increased my confidence as a qualitative problem-solver. I am now able to internalise concepts and use systems thinking for issues in everyday life. Action learning has also equipped me in decision-making, and taught me how to take correct and meaningful action. The use of multiple perspectives from the questioning process not only built my confidence in interacting with people, but also allowed me to be critical of actions taken that are of no benefit. The questioning process within the problem context encouraged participants to be critical about their beliefs and their reasons for various types of behaviour.

Action learning is useful for understanding reality, because people often have assumptions about reality that are not questioned. It is beneficial for continuous learning, as it creates an environment in which individuals are able to be critical, ask questions, form theories and reflect. The tools used in this dissertation are intended to enable student leaders to be their own problem-solvers and discoverers.

7.5 Change

Action learning seeks to bring about change. In my view, however, the greatest change is produced by an individual and what s/he has control over. Student leaders are highly sceptical of change. The environment of student leadership is extremely volatile due to the high turnover of students. Academic pressures and other extra-curricular demands make it impossible to produce any meaningful change in

the system because of lack of continuity. Throughout the process I asked who had the greatest influence in the system and where I could effect change. One of the solutions I recommended was that the student leaders formulate their own problems. This would be more acceptable to those who do not want solutions imposed on them. Another recommendation was that small changes be made by encouraging student leaders to interact effectively with the student population. The best way, I believe, to effect any change will be to disseminate the tools recommended in the student leaders' induction program, starting with a small number of students.

Action learning recommends solutions, which can be implemented in a given context. This part of my dissertation has dealt with the conceptual stage. The implementation stage is another phase and will demand that I form teams to implement the given solutions.

Change is also effected in organisations that have the incentives of fiscal benefit. Student governance operates on a voluntary basis so it can be difficult for a project of this nature to be taken seriously without the incentive of monetary values.

7.6 Action plans

My plan of action would be, firstly, to target the class representatives of the Engineering Council and disseminate the tools in the form of regular workshops. I would use the class representatives as a pilot study and evaluate their progress. A reflection upon this application will then be used for future workshops and will also be expanded into other student constituents.

7.7 Implications of conducting this Research and its impact on my current role

The SRC is a constituent that continually changes its identity due to the induction of new student leaders every year. The SGR 2001 was not readily accepted by some members of the SRC mainly because it was perceived to exclude other student leaders. Members have different political ideologies within the SRC, and producing change may prove difficult on account of politics. Recommendations such as choosing the SRC from the SP, were not particularly welcome because some student leaders still wanted to maintain the identity of campaigning campus-wide as it ensures transparency and legitimacy. I believe, choosing the SRC from the SP may result in unity and co-ordination between these two bodies. One of the outcomes of the SGR was the perception that all new and established student groups should motivate

and campaign widely to be elected into the SP. The implications of carrying out this task need to be examined critically.

Throughout the process I asked myself where I could effect change within the SRC. I am aware that the recommendations from this dissertation may not have been applied for the following reasons:

- I was perceived to be an outsider, with little knowledge of the political complexities of student governance. My recommendations fitted a context with similar political ideologies or uniform goals.
- The high turnover of student leadership meant a lack of continuity and vision. What was an issue for past student leaders may not be one for the new incumbents. Thus different value systems were encountered.
- My recommendations seemed somewhat "limited" and "naïve" in dealing with the nature of power, control and coercion. This was particularly interesting, as certain SRC members have strong political inclinations and need political models to understand their system. Their rationale was that since the University is an academic as well as a socio-political environment, it is necessary to understand the ills of the socio-political environment, such as financial exclusions, and reduce them by playing the political game through debate, exertion of force and politicking to gain majority support.
- Student governance is diverse, with different constituents. Convincing all student leaders to implement my recommendations would be too ambitious and idealistic.
- Student leaders are in the system for a short period of time and are under academic pressures. There may not be sufficient time for them to understand fully all the recommendations.

Bearing in mind these reasons, I reached a conclusion that the SRC is in a vicious loop, unable to prevent itself from being perceived as an irrelevant body. My questions were: What is the role of the SRC and what is its value to the University community? What kind of changes should be made to the SRC and how can change be produced in the SRC? The answers to these questions will determine their standing in student governance. In the meanwhile, the SRC may increase its effectiveness by focusing on the tools that equip its members in problem-solving which was a recommended form of action in this dissertation.

However the SRC can deal with the issue of continuity if they develop a system of policies and practices to keep the consistency of student governance and to achieve the goals of that and succeeding SRCs. This can be achieved through class representatives, whose purpose would not be merely to communicate student desires but to become a sub-system for developing student leadership.

Class representatives of progressive cohorts (1st, 2nd, 3rd year, etc) for a discipline will provide a basis for continuity if they were to meet together. They will also assist in providing platforms for developing student leadership together with leadership positions in other constituents e.g. residence, sports and clubs. In this way, candidates who stood for the SRC could develop track-records to demonstrate that they were not just mouthpieces for political interest and could establish their credibility before being elected to the SRC.

On the positive side, this dissertation encouraged participants to be involved in the process of thinking critically about the way in which they operate, and the questioning process allowed them to provide solutions that can propel change. It is important to note that the process of eliciting data can be taken as an intervention in its own right. I have therefore contributed to making positive changes to the system.

The impact this research had on me was the realisation that the political environment is not one in which I would like to work. I am a systems thinker, and I ascribe to its philosophies and ideologies. I am not attuned to the political game or interested in becoming involved with notions of power. I choose to work in contexts where the parties involved have similar goals, as it is easier to bring about change faster. I also seek to enable participants in a problem situation to think critically about their contexts and bring about self-development. Social contexts with diverse goals and ideologies require considerable effort, support, political astuteness and an understanding of political games. Change also takes time to materialise. This can be limiting, as the time factor of projects has to be taken into consideration as well as the costs incurred.

This research also empowered me to understand and improve on my strengths. I have acquired skills in problem-solving, debating and communication, and have learnt to strengthen my arguments. I still have to enhance my negotiation skills, as these seemed to be lacking throughout the process.

Overall, the process of writing the dissertation has been a means of co-ordinating and strengthening my thinking. My awareness of issues of co-operate governance has increased and the means of gathering data and bringing about a coherent report proved beneficial in sharpening my focus. This dissertation can therefore be considered as my contribution to, and the articulation of my mental models on, ensuring an effective SRC and student leadership and governance.

7.8 Starting the next cycle of Action learning

The next phase of action learning will provide this phase with greater depth and understanding so that the concerns encountered can be met. The questions for the next action learning cycle are:

- How can continuity be ensured and change brought about in the highly volatile environment of student leadership?
- How can any meaningful change be produced in the SRC, which is made up of students with different political ideologies and diverse interests?
- After designing solutions, if changes are acceptable to all concerned, how can these be implemented, what will be required and what hands-on approach will be used to change student leaders' ways of doing things and improve their capabilities?
- What methodologies and tools will be best used in coercive and conflicting relationships?
- What methodologies and tools will best deal with power and politics?

This chapter has revealed my personal impressions on conducting this research. When faced with a problem of this nature I will be better prepared to tackle the problem and produce results based on the experience of conducting this research.

"Today we are faced with a change in the nature of change. We are faced with constantly emerging new realities and massive transformations that call for changing and transforming the whole system.Faced with the new realities, our systems have to transform---as society has transformed. They have to learn to co-change (co-evolve) with their constantly changing environments. Thus, it is imperative that we understand what these transformations and new realities are. We have to grasp their implications for our systems, and apply our understanding of these implications to the transformation of our systems. We need to learn how to recreate our systems, how to redesign them so that they will have a "goodness of fit" with the emerged new realities. No small task by any means!" (Banathy, 1994, p. 88)

8. Conclusions

In this chapter, I draw my conclusions and evaluate the thesis as a whole. In other words, I reflect on my learning of the theories and make recommendations.

8.1 Co-operative Governance

Co-operative governance is relevant and necessary for the viability of any organisation in this era. It encourages transparency and enables information to be readily accessible within an organisation, which members can use to increase knowledge. Co-operative governance requires all members, either directly or indirectly through representation, to make decisions that will affect the organisation. It demands that members of an organisation be skilled and well informed to make the right choices and it recognises all those that directly or indirectly affect an organisation. It therefore requires a culture that stresses continuous development. From my research, co-operative governance is based on the principles of cybernetics, and those applying need an adequate knowledge of why cybernetics is essential, what is required and on what principles and philosophies it is based before they can make use of it in their context.

8.2 Change

Change in governance is a constant and natural phenomenon. (Heraclitus of Greece, in 513 BC, remarked that nothing is permanent except change.) A critical look at the process of change will ensure that the desired development will be achieved. Change, in the context of this research, may have been brought about through the process of discourse concerning the review.

8.3 Recommendations

In answering the question of why projects taken by the SRC to review and resolve student governance result in little or no implementation and how to find alternative ways the SRC can improve student governance that will enable them to be effective in co-operative governance.

The contextual issues such as apathy, fragmentation between student constituents and the strained relationship between University management and student leadership were contributing factors to the problem. The intervention is to improve communication and co-ordination in student governance and this requires improving the information channels and maintaining a harmonious relationship with all student constituents. It includes using the class representatives, selecting the SRC from the SP and improving representation by decentralising the student parliament (SP). Partnerships and support from university management is also vital in ensuring change in student governance thus co-ordination also requires the SRC engages in rich interactions with other student leaders and the University community. They need to be equipped with the relevant skills to maintain and improve co-ordination. These include an action learning approach, to improve interactions with other student leaders and ensure realistic action plans are drawn, having a culture of documentation to ensure continuity of student leadership, constant leadership training and utilising systems tools such as brainstorming and the affinity diagram. These tools can be disseminated in the form of workshops.

Another factor to the 2001 SGR was the level of communication and the requisite capacity of the review team. I recommend a structure that enables members to communicate effectively by improving and/or introducing co-ordinating, control, intelligence and policy functions. The co-ordinator will liaise constantly with the team and provide a platform from which the teams can share ideas. Continuous communication should be instilled, which is aided electronically through emails, websites and the provision of minutes.

The success of transformation in student governance is also based on a policy that promotes transformation. Student constituents' policy should also be modified with clear roles and responsibilities.

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Appendix A

Below is a list of questions I used for assessing the Student Governance Review. I interviewed 9 members of the SGR team.

- What is your role in the university?
- Why do you think the review process was carried out?
- What do you think is the purpose of student governance?
- How did you come to take part in the process?
- Why do you think the whole process was initiated?
- What did you learn from the whole experience?
- What skills were sharpened as a result of the process?
- What were your frustrations about the process?
- Were you able to be creative in the whole process?
- What do you think should have been done that would have made the review a success?
- Tell me about your leadership style.
- What did you think about the new model of student governance?
- What do you think are the intended and unintended consequences?
- Name three people who have influenced you or are positive towards you, and say something about their strengths.
- Choose two people out of these three that are similar, and explain why.

Appendix B

This section consists of raw data from some of the interviews and some of the activities observed. It also consists of an affinity diagram of the issues of the SGR 2001.

Interview with project team member of ownership and participation - July 2001

This person was a member of the SRC in 1993, and also part of the committee that helped the SRC members of 2002 to understand the model. This interview took place in the postgraduate Engineering Management room at the University of Cape Town. I explained why I was doing the study and told him about the importance of confidentiality. The interviews would be held in confidence and he would be anonymous, so that he could feel free to discuss anything with me. The following is an edited version of the interview. Q indicates the questions I asked, and A indicates the answers of the interviewee. Student governance will be referred to as SG. My thoughts are in brackets.

Q: What is your role in student governance?

A: I am a project manager of IT for SHAWCO.

Q: Why, in your opinion, was the review carried out?

A: There was a need to change student governance at UCT. The current system was not yielding results. They should change the way it is structured and how it functions, especially the SRC and the SP. Students need a student governance that communicates with them and directly represents student interests. Student governance should form its own governance system.

Q: What do you think is the purpose of student governance?

A: SG represents the interests of students. It's all about the students. It is about running the university with university management. SG should consider issues of co-operative governance and should have a larger stake in running the university with university management.

Q: How did you become part of the process?

A: I was invited by a past member of the SRC, because I was also a member of the SRC.

Q: Why do you think the whole process was initiated? (*probing question following the second question*)

A: In 1995, the governance dispensation failed to get a quorum. People lost faith in the SRC. SG did not adequately represent students. The SRC did not have a role. There was a gap between what the SRC was doing and what students wanted. Student leaders did not have capacity and were not empowered to

influence decisions. There is a need to take a holistic look at SG. There is a difference in perspective in each of the different generations of the SRC. The 1995 SRC was very politically vibrant. Students were interested in transformation. Issues were tackled through extensive debate and mass meetings. Students were willing to take part. The SRC has now changed focus. Students are more individualised and interested in self-development. Students now are in an education system that has proved and encouraged racial integration. The country is now concerned with economic revival. However, the SRC is not transforming according to these trends.

Q: What were your learning experiences?

A: My leadership, interpersonal and debating skills were strengthened. My previous experience in SG helped. Working in the SGR gave me the opportunity to sharpen these skills. I am passionate about governance issues within the university and was able to contribute to the sort of change that will make a real difference. I grew up a lot.

Q: What were your frustrations with the SGR?

A: The facilitator did not give enough time to the project. He was multitasking. Things didn't work as fast as they should have, so I took the role of the facilitator because I want to be involved in more than one specific area. I wanted a general leadership role so I could get a general understanding of what the problems were. There was also not enough participation in the interview sessions and the people involved in the interviews didn't really know enough about SG. I also question the validity of some issues that came up.

Q: Were you able to be creative/flexible in the process and in what way?

A: Yes, I was able to be creative by researching, collating information, analysing issues and dealing with and approaching problems in a creative and in-depth way.

Q: What do you think should have been done to make the review a success?

A: There should have been more interest in the process from relevant stakeholders. Student leaders took this process more seriously. They should change perceptions and attitudes, because there is a negative attitude towards the SRC and the SP because of its political climate.

Q: What did you learn from all this?

A: I gained the ability to run a project. I used all my skills - organisational, leadership. Helps in the career I want to pursue.

Q: What is your leadership style?

A: I am a team player. I use people's talents to get results. I am very reluctant to delegate functions. I tend to do everything on my own. I am driven and a go-getter.

Q: What do you think are the intended consequences of the new model?

A: Only people with SG experience will be nominated for the SRC.

Q: What are the unintended consequences?

A: None as such, but people are afraid of change. The process of communicating might eliminate their fears.

Q: What do you think of the new model?

A: It is too complex and very difficult for an average student to understand. It presents interesting challenges, however, and forces others to focus on some that are pertinent and important to the university. It takes care of a lot of problems plaguing previous SRCs. There is more accountability and this model begins to answer a lot of problems. It met with a lot of resistance in the beginning. I am on the committee that is supposed to help the new SRC understand the model. It is too complex for them and they are now focusing on other issues they should deal with.

Interview with a project member of structural interrelationship

This was a member from my team. I chose her as part of my team because of her expertise in and insight into structural deficiencies in organisations. I met her in her office around noon. She is also a postgraduate student. I explained why I was doing the study and also spoke about confidentiality.

Q: What is your role in the university?

A: I am a PhD student, a teaching assistant and a Maths tutor.

Q: What are your needs as a student? *(since she was coming from an objective point of view, I wanted to assess if her needs were aligned to the services of SG).*

A: Well, there are a lot of restrictions for international students here. No scholarships are available, the fees are exorbitant and a work permit is difficult to get. The government legislation needs to change.

Q: What did you learn from the SGR?

A: Increased awareness of the student system. Students are denied knowledge and information. Access to resources through student bodies is difficult to obtain. I interviewed some students and a

representative of the sports council. Students are not aware of what the SRC and the student parliament do. There is a negative image of the SRC.

Q: Why do you think the review was carried out?

A: SG needs a governance structure, which at the moment is denying students fees/loans and bursaries. They are inefficient in getting things done. Therefore the SGR is necessary. They are inefficient because they lack skills and have a low confidence level. They need more exposure. Leaders should be chosen with a wide range of skills and they should be in touch with the wider community.

Q: What were the weaknesses in the whole review?

A: People were disinterested in the whole process. Team members were not really involved because there was no learning incentive. We did not see the bigger picture in all of this.

Q: What do you think should have been done to rectify the problems?

A: There should be a better structure of the SGR committee and better communication of the structure. Maybe an outside independent body could have helped.

Q: What positive thing came out of this experience?

A: There was greater awareness of the student system. People were elected to influence policy, to ensure that laws are kept, benefiting the community they are representing. To ensure that corporate governance needs are met so that the overall purpose of the system is not abused. It was a great opportunity to learn from where knowledge was imported. You meet lots of people and contribute to their growth.

Q: What do you value most?

A: Truth and human interaction. Things shouldn't be abused and we must question the rules so that there can be growth.

Interview with a member of the steering committee and president of the SRC 2001

Q: What is your current role in the university?

A: I am a part-time lecturer

Q: How did you get involved in student governance?

A: I was initially a member of the East African Society. I was a great critic and I had ideas to bring about change. Thus my presence was felt and I was elected the following year as the president of the East African Society. I got involved in the SRC through the networks developed.

Q: What were your learning experiences in the SRC?

A: I had a lot of personality clashes with members of the SRC. There was no accountability amongst us. I don't expect to motivate anybody. They also want concrete details. I was robbed of moral authority. I struggled for resources in terms of commitment and availability of people.

Q: What do you think of the SGR members?

A: Some of them were not clear what it was about. Some thought it was the co-ordinator's personal project. They didn't want to be bogged down by the SRC.

Q: Why do you think the SRC took up this project?

A: The SRC wanted to drive the process. They were previously a political voice in apartheid days. Students are part and parcel of the institution. The mindsets of students and the institution need to be changed. The SRC needs to reclaim its co-ordinating role because currently it is independent and not optimal for decisions. Decisions are not in synchronicity with those made at senate.

Q: What were your learning experiences with the SGR?

A: I wanted things to go forward. There were problems with co-ordination. Management did not seem concerned. Delays and organisational hitches could have been avoided if they had given the work to someone less busy. Management was not supportive, because of the negative perception of the SRC. They think we are still a political organisation ready to cause commotion.

Q: What are the unintended consequences of the new model?

A: Less participation. Students do not participate because they are narrow-minded. They do not have an understanding of student governance.

Q: What are the intended consequences of the new model?

A: More participation, effective, efficient and democratic governance. Student leaders will be treated as equal partners and not junior leaders. Professional leaders will be in place instead of amateurs. SG will be integrative and will have financial resources from people's pockets.

Q: What do you think were the issues of this review?

A: There were less than enough resources and less than enough capacity.

Q: Describe your leadership style.

A: I am autocratic and visionary.

Interview with a current member of the SRC 2002

Q: What is your role in SG?

A: I am an SRC sabbatical member.

Q: Why did you get involved in the SRC?

A: I am not happy about the services offered to students concerning the stuff they teach you in class. The offer given to students is not worth the payments made by students.

Q: What can you say about the model of student governance from the SGR?

A: SG is not working. Students are more focused on trying to be SG leaders. It is a hindrance to students who are academically strong. This model is not taking into consideration academic structure.

Q: What were your learning points in the SGR?

A: The SGR process was good in that people thought about the whole concept and tried to make changes. However, the models that showed the different sectors within SG were hard to understand. It is very hard to implement something when it is already dysfunctional. We do not see the links to the whole properly.

Q: What were your frustrations with the process?

A: People did not understand the element in the model. There was also lack of clarity in the process and it was antagonistic. The process seemed shut off from the student population. The model did not cover the important things like the time factor and academic demands as well as the academic sector. It did not resemble a true representation of what students are. Students are aligned by interest groups. It also doesn't take into consideration the age gaps of student. *(I think she meant here that there are different generations of student leaders on campus. The younger student leaders are academically inclined and not concerned with politics and the older student leaders are more politically inclined.)*

Q: What were the successes of the SGR?

A: The interviews got the whole campus talking through debates, forums and small groups. There was more participation. It focused on and co-opted the different student constituents. SG must still give constituents room for their own initiative. Another flaw was that there was no clear mandate for project leaders. They were focused on specific aspects. They were more concerned about the structure and less about the individuals. Structures are set up by people.

Q: What are the intended consequences of the model?

A: A functioning SG that will be able to allow students to perform well in SG and be an example to other campuses.

Q: What are the unintended consequences?

A: Student leaders not having the time to carry out their roles and responsibilities. An SG model not relevant to an average student and a model not concerned with the students. It may also run the risk of being a formalised structure and must dictate what other sectors need.

Q: What do you think the whole purpose of SG is?

A: It is to channel students' needs to a solution and if there is no solution, create one. It is a link with the university and exists to understand students' needs and be flexible in meeting their needs

Q: How has the SGR impacted you personally?

A: It has made me more conscious of the responsibilities of a SG leader and that is to meet student needs by relevant ways/means and methods. It is all about the students and it is our responsibility to make things work, to get the best structure. For this I am impressed with the SGR, to think that such student leaders exist.

Q: What is your leadership style?

A: I am people- and development-focused. I am also lessons- and output-oriented. I also look for excellence by doing a lot of talking about thoughts and unhappiness. People are more important. Give them room to fail because the possibility of failure is essential for human growth.

Participant observation on the National Summit for different student leaders - 20-22 July, 2001

A national summit was arranged by the steering committee of the SGR to gain perspectives of the complexities of student governance in other universities and provide a platform for student leaders to discuss and formulate a way forward for the 2001 SGR. The conference took place in one of the lecture theatres in the Law Building and commenced at approximately 9am.

Student leaders and members of the SGR were present. The universities represented included the University of the Witwatersrand, University of the Free State, Rhodes University, University of the Western Cape, University of the North and the University of Cape Town. The co-ordinator, who is a past SRC member, opened the floor by thanking guests for coming and gave reasons why the SGR was taking place: namely, to provide a co-ordinated and efficient SG system that will be effective in the model of co-operative governance in the university. The master of ceremony then introduced the guest speaker - a member of the Centre for Higher Education and Transformation (CHET) – who discussed the complexities of higher education. In his speech, he talked about the role of CHET, which is to assist in developing student leadership, especially at the SRC level. Their role is to increase student leaders' awareness of the role of higher education in the development of the country and continent. He also talked about the requirements of co-operative governance within higher education, which include the sharing of powers and responsibilities. This has its challenges when there are incompatible management styles and lack of clarity as to the role of student leadership. He said that CHET's role is therefore to equip student leaders to be effective partners in co-operative governance. One way in which this is done is through running workshops that strengthen and develop institutional capacity in co-operative governance.

After his talk, the co-ordinator discussed how the rest of the day would be structured. Participants, depending on their interests, would break into different project groups. To reiterate, these were structural interrelationships, capacity and incentives, representation, electoral systems, finance, and ownership and participation. Once again, I was facilitating the structural interrelationships group. We first began with weaknesses in the current system. This included low participation and co-ordination in student governance, including poor representation and electoral systems, the lack of capacity and fragmented relationship between the SRC and the SP. We then defined student governance as the governance and management of student affairs. We then proceeded to brainstorm ideas for an ideal system. Two types of systems were discussed: a centralised system where the SRC is the supreme body and different sectors would form subcommittees of the SRC; and a decentralised system where the SRC would play a more facilitative role and different sectors would be autonomous.

The findings of this group were then collated. The different project teams then broke for lunch, after which the groups presented their findings to the participants. Some of the findings included the general perception of SRC and other student bodies as not meeting student needs and being irrelevant to the student population. The “higher” the organisation, the less evident were its successes and activities to students. There is inadequate communication between the different elements of the SG system, and the composition of structures (particularly the SRC) is perceived as not being representative of the student body, or as incapable and ineffective (individual members). There is a lack of synergy in the system: SRC – residence sector - faculty sector, low capacity and low participation due to the high cost of student leadership and involvement.

Ideas included providing incentives to increase participation, such as free transport and remission on student fees and mentorship. An increase in participation would also mean using all forms of communication, including the media, to educate students about the activities of SG.

Participant observation on the consultative conference to disseminate the findings to the student population and propose a model - 13th October 2001.

This consultative conference was aimed at providing feedback to the student population on the outcomes of the review. It commenced at approximately 9am and took place in the one of the lecture theatres on campus. There were approximately 80 people present, including the new SRC leaders, the SGR project leaders, some members of the steering committee, the co-ordinator and student leaders from other student sectors. I arrived in time to present. The different project teams presented their findings and recommendations. A summarised list of all the findings and recommendations concluded that:

- There is little or no **accountability** amongst the different student bodies and within the SRC/SP.
- There is no system that ensures **continuity** in the operations and goals of student governance; the **transition** period and inductions are currently inadequate to transfer skills and knowledge.
- There is little or no leadership development in the different student bodies.
- **Management** lacks confidence in student leaders and in their ability to be effective in the university co-operative governance.
- The class representative system is under-utilised and under-developed.
- The SRC and SP are not widely viewed as representative of the entire student body
- Fragmented and unco-ordinated student governance implies communication difficulties between student representatives and their constituencies.

- There is a general lack of co-ordination.
 - Inconsistencies in the manner in which different sectors of SG represent their constituencies in committees
 - Lack of reporting mechanisms after committee meetings
 - Lack of job descriptions for most SG office bearers → confusion
- There are capacity problems.
- Different selection styles reinforce fragmentation between the SRC and the SP.
- Lack of administrative capacity and incentives

Some recommendations included improving communication through the media, an emphasis on fundraising, utilising the class representative system and changing the selection mechanisms to attract high calibre students.

After the presentations, the co-ordinator presented the final outcome of a SG model. It was similar to the national government model. The SP would be called the assembly. Campaigns would be along the lines of student sectors. Sixty seats would be contested and the winning sectors would make up the assembly. A student executive council would be selected from the assembly. SG would also comprise a senate filled by the faculty council heads.

This presentation attracted a lot of questions such as how the academic sector and the clubs and societies fitted into the model. Some student leaders mentioned that it was too political and ran the risk of being redundant and still irrelevant.

We were split into groups to discuss the outcomes and some student leaders still had questions on why the national government framework needed to be applied in SG. I spoke to the co-ordinator, who explained that it was a means to eliminate sectors from the SP not interested in dealing with the socio-political nature of the university. He said membership in the SP was lacking as people talk about diverse and incompatible interests from sport to politics, and some people are not interested in these discussions. This model, he said, aimed to gather people who were truly interested in the students.

Affinity Diagram of the Issues of the SGR 2001

Based on the situation given in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2 and the data above, the problems will now be grouped in an affinity diagram.

Level of SGR 2001 effectiveness

SRC/SG effectiveness

Structural issues with the review

Inadequate coordination of the team by the co-ordinator
Little guidance of team from the steering committee.

Level of management of the process

Insufficient time for team leaders and members
Lack of communication amongst team members
Little understanding of the requirements for the process
Inadequate co-ordination of the team
Lack of ability to see the bigger picture for the team members
Lack of proper management of the questioning process
Non-availability of certain project leaders
Unclear processes and requirements
Low motivation and commitment of some team members.

Level of acceptance of the model

A high level of complaints about its complexity
Lack of understanding of outcomes from student leaders
Lack of ability of model to address the academic needs of students
Irrelevant to the needs of students

Contextual Issues

Confusion between the SRC and SP concerning roles
Fragmented relationship between the SRC/SP and other student constituents
Unclear roles and responsibilities of the student constituents
Independence and self-sufficiency of other student constituents
Negative perception of the SRC by University management and students
Apathy
SRC unable to meet the needs of students and continual fire fights.
Lack of continuity of leadership
SRC unable to communicate effectively with students because of the structure
Limited capacity of student leadership

Level of support of the process

Inadequate participation from students and management
Lack of support from University management

Level of communication of the team

- Lack of communication between the teams
- Little platform to share ideas
- Little interaction and guidance between the team and University management
- Lack of communication at the final stage of the project
- Inadequate coordination of the team by the co-ordinator

Level of capacity of the review team

- Little understanding of the process amongst the SGR team
- Lack of administrative capacity
- Under-estimation of the nature of the work
- Lack of ability of some team members to produce outcomes on time

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